

BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to  
*Quality Assurance and  
Assessment*  
2020-2021



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# Summary of Changes

Welcome to the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment 2020-21.

As part of Pearson's annual review of centre guidance and documentation, we have provided more information throughout this handbook concerning the delivery and assessment of BTEC Higher National programmes.

The 2019-20 academic year brought unprecedented challenges and changes for everyone, and it is our intention for the quality assurance of BTEC Higher Nationals programmes to be remote for the 2020-21 academic year, at outlined in the [BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination](#).

As a reminder, and in line with Ofqual regulations, no Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) can be awarded for students completing assessments after 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020.

Pearson has created [a guide to help centres with the teaching and learning](#) for Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications in 2020-21. This guide takes into consideration public health guidance and how teaching can continue either face to face or remotely this academic year.

Any distance learning approval that was given due to the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown restrictions is temporary, and you will need to formally apply for distance learning provision if you wish to continue delivering your BTEC Higher Nationals programmes via distance learning. For more information, please read Pearson's [distance learning and assessment policy](#).



**WE'RE HERE  
TO HELP**



Any questions regarding the assessment and internal verification of Higher Nationals qualifications can be answered by centres' External Examiners (EEs) or Pearson's Higher Nationals Assessment team at [hnqa@pearson.com](mailto:hnqa@pearson.com).

# Introduction

This guide is designed for **Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals programme teams** and provides essential guidance on the planning and implementation of internal assessment.

All BTEC Higher Nationals units are assessed through internal assessment, which means that centres can deliver the programme in a way that suits students and relates to local needs. The way in which centres deliver the programme must ensure that assessment is fair and consistent as defined by the requirements for national standards and that these standards are consistent over time.

To achieve this, it is important that centres:

- Make sure that there is a Programme Leader in place, who can support the whole programme team in understanding higher level assessment standards
- Make full use of materials provided by us which define and exemplify assessment requirements such as specifications, published assignments, other support materials and guidance
- Plan the assessment of units to fit with delivery – the plan should allow for the links between units, such as where one unit needs to build on another
- Write suitable assessments (for example, assignments, projects or case studies) or select assessments from available resources, adapting them as necessary
- Plan the assessment for each unit in terms of when it will be authorised by the Programme Leader, when it will be taught and assessed, and how long it will take
- Ensure each assessment is fit for purpose, valid, will deliver reliable assessment outcomes across Assessors, and is internally verified before use
- Provide preparation and support for students before the start of the final assessment
- Make careful and consistent assessment decisions based only on using the defined assessment criteria and unit requirements and the overarching approach to grading
- Ensure that all student evidence submitted for assessment is valid and authentic
- Validate and record assessment decisions carefully and completely
- Work closely with us to ensure that implementation, delivery and assessment are consistent with national standards.

# Which qualifications does this guide cover?

This guide applies to centres in the UK and internationally.

This guide covers:	This guide does not cover:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ BTEC Higher Nationals at Levels 4 to 5 <b>(QCF)</b></li> <li>✓ BTEC Higher Nationals at Levels 4 to 5 <b>(RQF)</b></li> <li>✓ BTEC Higher Nationals at Levels 4 to 5 delivered as the knowledge-based component of BTEC Higher Apprenticeships</li> <li>✓ Higher Nationals on Pearson’s Self Regulated Framework (SRF) – centres should also refer to the <a href="#">Self Regulated Framework (SRF) Quality Assurance Handbook</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ BTEC Levels 3 to 4 Foundation Diploma in Art and Design (FAD)</li> <li>✗ BTEC Professional qualifications at Levels 4 to 7</li> <li>✗ BTEC Professional qualifications at Levels 4 to 7 delivered as the knowledge-based component of BTEC Higher Apprenticeships</li> </ul>

## Self Regulated (SRF) Higher Nationals (prior to September 2016)

Qualifications available on Pearson’s Self Regulated Framework are customised to meet specific needs not already met by regulated qualifications. Pearson Self Regulated Framework qualifications are not regulated by external bodies such as Ofqual, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation or any other UK regulatory body.

All enhanced quality measures apply to the SRF Higher Nationals in addition to the centre quality assurance procedures. Detailed guidance for BTEC SRF Higher Nationals that were approved prior to September 2016, can be found in the [Self Regulated Framework Policy](#).



# Self Regulated (SRF) Higher Nationals (from September 2016)

Through the commissioned Higher National service, the centre is able to commission Higher National qualifications. This allows them to work with Pearson in creating complete bespoke Higher National qualifications; or designing locally devised units, to meet a specific skill requirement; or importing accredited Higher National units from other Pearson approved Higher National qualifications (Meeting Local Needs). Further information about the SRF and Pearson's Self Regulated Policy can be found at [building a bespoke BTEC Higher National qualification](#).

Pearson Self Regulated Framework qualifications are not regulated by external bodies such as Ofqual, SQA Accreditation or any other UK regulatory body. However, they are required to be the same standard as the Ofqual regulated Higher Nationals. They are also required to be delivered in such a way as to meet Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) expectations.

Commissioned Higher Nationals follow the same assessment policies as regulated Higher Nationals on the RQF offered from September 2016. They also need to meet the same requirements for Total Qualification Time (TQT) and Guided Learning Hours (GLH). All enhanced quality measures apply to the customised Higher Nationals in addition to the centre quality assurance procedures.

# Qualification Approval

Centres that are new to the delivery of Pearson programmes will be required to seek approval initially through the existing approval process and then through the programme approval process. Programme approval for new centres is considered through a 'Review and Approval' visit to the centre.

Prior to approval being given, centres will be required to submit evidence to demonstrate that they:

- Have the human and physical resources required for effective delivery and assessment
- Understand the implications for external examination and agree to abide by these
- Have a robust internal assessment system supported by 'fit for purpose' assessment documentation
- Have a system to internally verify assessment decisions, to ensure standardised assessment decisions are made across all assessors and sites.

Applications for approval must be supported by the head of the organisation, (Principal or Chief Executive, etc.) and, include a declaration that the centre will operate the programmes strictly as approved, and in line with Pearson requirements.

The process for existing centres seeking to renew their approval is called the Programme Review and Approval (PRA) and further detailed information about guidelines and processes can be found [here](#).

This document sets out the different processes for approval depending on whether a centre:

- Is actively delivering Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals
- Is approved, but not actively delivering Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals
- Is in the process of seeking approval to deliver Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals
- Has not yet started an application seeking to deliver Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals.

The document also sets out the pricing structure for the different types of approval.

Centres may wish to 'import' units from another regulated Higher Nationals qualification through the **Meeting Local Needs (MLN)** process. Centres can import up to 30 Level 4 credits into the HNC and 60 credits into the HND (up to 30 Level 4 credits and up to 30 Level 5 credits for RQF HNDs and up to 60 credits for QCF HNDs). More information regarding MLN, including the online application form, can be found on our [website](#).

Please note that units can only be imported from the same qualification suite. For example, only RQF units can be imported into an RQF qualification. For RQF qualifications, the unit being imported

must be of the same level as the unit being substituted; i.e. Level 5 units cannot be imported into the HNC.

In addition, centres must apply for MLN approval **every year of delivery**, even if the programme structure is not going to change.

## Approval to deliver the BTEC Higher Nationals at additional sites

Some centres may wish to deliver the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals at additional sites. Guidance concerning approval for delivery and assessment at additional sites is provided in the [Additional Sites Policy](#).

The document:

- Clarifies the requirements for approved centres that have more than one physical location
- Explains how Pearson control any regulating and reputational risk when establishing relationships with external bodies.

## Collaborative Arrangements

Some centres may wish to work in collaboration with other centres to deliver the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals. The [Collaborative Arrangements Policy](#) provides further information on this. The policy defines collaborative arrangements in the UK and internationally and describes the different models of collaborative arrangements and their associated principles.


A collaborative arrangement is an agreement where an approved centre (the lead centre) works collaboratively to deliver a vocational qualification(s) with other organisation(s) that will normally be an approved Pearson centre(s).

The three models of collaborative arrangements are:

Informal collaboration

This is when two or more approved centres work together to share information, assignments, staff and physical resources. There is no shared assessment, and each has total ownership of its own quality assurance. No Pearson approval is required.

<p>Consortium collaborative arrangement</p>	<p>Two or more approved centres gain permission from Pearson to work together to deliver specific Pearson qualifications. They are jointly responsible for the assessment and quality assurance of the qualification(s); each centre has equal responsibility for the registration and certification of students. Pearson approval is required for this type of arrangement.</p>
<p>Exceptional collaborative arrangements</p>	<p>Other collaborative arrangements may be allowable. Such arrangements must always be agreed beforehand with Pearson’s Responsible Officer on a case-by-case basis. Approval and written agreement between all participating centres are required.</p>



If a centre delivers a Higher Nationals programme(s) via an exceptional collaborative arrangement, the External Examiner will be provided with a copy of the approval documentation by Pearson and will be required to visit each site within the arrangement.

## Distance Learning

If students undertake the qualifications through distance learning, then it is important to be aware of the [Distance Learning and Assessment policy](#). The policy outlines the minimum requirements that Pearson expects must be met by centres when delivering Pearson qualifications through distance learning. Centres must ensure that when using distance learning, the method of delivery meets in full any specified requirements for the delivery and assessment of the qualifications and units being delivered. Completion of the Distance Learning self-assessment is mandatory for all centres delivering Higher Nationals through distance learning and can be found in Appendix A of the policy. The QAA have also provided guidance on distance learning which can be helpful for centres to plan their delivery. It can be found [here](#).

## Removal of Centre Approval

Regardless of the type of centre, Pearson reserves the right to withdraw either qualification or centre approval when it deems there is an irreversible breakdown in the centre’s ability either to quality assure its programme delivery or its assessment standards as outlined in the [policy on the removal of centre and programme approval](#).

The decision to remove centre or programme approval may arise because:

- The Pearson Malpractice Committee determines this is an appropriate sanction to impose, following a malpractice investigation
- The centre has breached the terms and conditions of its centre or programme approval
- There are significant and/or repeated quality issues identified through Pearson’s quality assurance processes

- There are long-standing financial issues which have not been resolved by the centre
- The centre has approval for programmes but is no longer active
- Pearson no longer has confidence in the centre's senior management team.

There is a process of appeal against the decision which is also outlined in this policy.

# Essential guidance

## BTEC qualification specification

The specification for each BTEC qualification is the document that Programme Leaders and teams must use as a first point of reference for all planning and assessment. Specifications are accompanied by important assessment and delivery guidance which provide instructions and advice for each unit in the qualification. Please note, in larger programmes with a significant number of units available, the units may be published as separate documents to the initial specification guidance. All BTEC specifications are freely available on our [website](#).

## BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination

We use quality assurance to check that all centres are working to national standards. It gives us the opportunity to identify and provide support where it is needed in order to safeguard certification. It also allows us to recognise and support good practice. Every year we publish this updated [BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination](#) to explain our quality assurance processes for the coming academic year.

## Pearson support materials

A wide range of support materials have been produced by Pearson to support centres with the implementation, delivery and assessment of RQF Higher Nationals programmes. A collection of assessment guidance videos has been produced and are available on the [qualification pages](#) for each Higher Nationals subject. This centre guide is also complemented with [assessment and feedback guidance for centres](#), and should be read in tandem with this guide.

In addition, past training content from Pearson is freely available for centres to access on the [qualification pages](#) for each Higher Nationals subject. Training packs available include:

- Getting Ready to Teach training for each individual sector
- Assessment Planning and Assignment Writing for new BTEC Higher Nationals (RQF)
- An Introduction to Assessment and Assignment Writing for new BTEC Higher Nationals (RQF)
- BTEC Higher Nationals Generic Internal Verification and Preparing for External Examination (RQF).

Pearson also continues to offer training events for centres, both online and face-to-face, at multiple venues throughout the year for the new BTEC Higher Nationals (RQF). A schedule of events, and a form to book onto national events, can be found on our [website](#).

If no national events are currently scheduled or available for a specific training course, or if a centre would prefer a training course be delivered just for them, we can arrange for one of our specialised trainers to come and deliver centre-based (in house) training. Any training courses from our national programme can be delivered within the centre and more information, including a form to request centre-based training, can be found on our [website](#). In accordance with Ofqual guidance, we cannot customise the content of our training, but our trainers may be able to pitch the training at the delegates' level of knowledge and experience.

## Edexcel Online (EOL)

Edexcel Online (EOL) is a multifunctional system for centres. Access is password protected and is managed by the centre's examinations officer(s). Screens show programmes and students within a centre and allow for new registrations or withdrawals. External Examiner allocations and consequent external examination reports can be viewed here. EOL can be accessed at <http://www.edexcelonline.com>. Support for the use of EOL can be found on our [website](#).

## Forms and templates

We publish a range of useful [forms and templates](#) on our website for centres to use. These forms are not mandatory, but using them will help to ensure that centres are meeting requirements.

The forms and templates provided include:

- Internal verification of assignment briefs
- Assignment briefs/Example Assessment (EABs) for HNs
- Internal verification of assessment decisions
- Assessment tracking documents
- Tutor observation records and witness statements
- Student declarations.

# Regulation and Oversight

## The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

As well as meeting the quality requirements for the delivery of Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals, centres also need to meet the quality and standards requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). This is the independent body responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education, and this includes UK qualifications delivered outside the UK. As such, Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals must also be delivered by centres in a way that satisfies the quality standards prescribed by the QAA.

The QAA has developed a [Quality Code](#) in liaison with the higher education sector and it is maintained and published on the sector's behalf, by the QAA. It sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet.

The purpose of the Quality Code is to:

- Safeguard the academic standards of UK higher education
- Assure the quality of the learning opportunities that UK higher education offers to students
- Promote continuous and systematic improvement in UK higher education
- Ensure that information about UK higher education is publicly available.

In 2018, the Quality Code underwent substantial revision, now comprising three elements that work together to provide a reference for effective quality assurance.

1. **Expectations** that state how providers of higher education set and maintain standards and manage the quality of provision.
2. **Practices** that enhance the student experience and underpin the delivery of the expectations.
  - a. **Core practices** that must be demonstrated by all providers of higher education within the UK.
  - b. **Common practices** that are demonstrated by providers of higher education in line with their missions, regulatory requirements and students' needs. These practices underpin quality and are common across providers of higher education in the UK but are not regulatory requirements in England.
3. **Advice and guidance** that helps all providers of higher education to develop and maintain effective quality assurance.



# QAA Review Methods

## Further Education Colleges

QAA will undertake Quality Review Visits on behalf of the Office for Students (OfS), Department for the Economy Northern Ireland (DENI) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

The Gateway process is one element of the regulatory and funding bodies' operating model for quality assessment in England and Northern Ireland and applies to providers seeking to enter the (publicly funded) higher education sector. A Quality Review Visit may also be necessary where there is evidence of a sufficiently serious problem in an established provider.

A Quality Review Visit will:

- Rigorously test a new entrant's readiness to enter the higher education sector
- Re-test the quality aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements at the end of a new entrant's four-year developmental period
- Re-test the quality aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements in an 'established' provider that has been deemed by the relevant funding body to require enhanced monitoring.

The outcomes of the Quality Review Visit will be considered by the relevant regulatory or funding body, which will make full use of them in reaching its broader judgement about the provider's readiness, or not, to enter the higher education sector, or to remain in, or exit the 'developmental period' as appropriate.

## Alternative Providers

Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) is QAA's principal review method for alternative providers. The Handbook available on the [QAA website](#) gives guidance to providers preparing for, and taking part in, this type of review.

For alternative providers requiring educational oversight for Tier 4 Sponsorship purposes, there are a number of transitional arrangements in place for designated providers that can be found [here](#).

The review of quality assurance arrangements is carried out by peer reviewers - staff and students from other providers. The reviewers are guided by a set of UK Expectations about the provision of higher education contained in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Students are at the heart of Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers). There are opportunities for the provider's students to take part in the review, including contributing a student submission, meeting the review team during the review visit, working with their providers in response to review outcomes, and acting as the lead student representative. In addition, review teams of three or more normally include a student reviewer.

Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) culminates in the publication of a report containing the judgements and other findings. The provider is then obliged to produce an action plan in consultation with students, describing how it intends to respond to those findings. Action plans are monitored through the annual monitoring process.

## The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and is a non-ministerial department. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) is the regulator for all qualifications in Northern Ireland.

Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications have been aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and have been accredited to the Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The RQF was launched in October 2015 and it is now a requirement for Awarding Bodies to describe the size of their qualifications by using Total Qualification Time (TQT) as a descriptor. This provides an indication of how long a typical learner will take to study for a qualification. It is also necessary to indicate the number of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) and this represents the number of hours tutors are available to give guidance to students for learning. The TQT needed for each qualification is given in each Higher National qualification specification.

## The Competition and Markets Authority

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) work to promote competition for the benefit of consumers, both within and outside the UK. Their aim is to make markets work well for consumers, businesses and the economy. In terms of the delivery of Higher Education, it has an important function for students and providers of Higher Education.

'Higher Education Providers Consumer Law' applies to Higher Education through the relationship between providers of Higher Education and their students. Providers are required to provide information about courses, costs, terms and conditions and complaint handling prior to students starting courses. Information must be clear and transparent. If these obligations are not met, then providers could be in breach of consumer law and students may have the right to take legal action. Therefore, it is essential for providers to comply with these requirements. Further information can be found [here](#).

# Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

The Higher Education Act 2004 required the appointment of an independent body to oversee a student complaints scheme in England and Wales and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) was designated to operate this scheme in 2005. From the outset, all universities in England and Wales were required to subscribe to the Scheme.

On 1 September 2015, the relevant section of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 came into force on extending the range of higher education providers that are required to participate in the Scheme. Subscribers now include providers offering higher education courses that are designated for student support funding, as well as institutions with degree awarding powers.

Examples of complaints that the OIA deal with are those relating to teaching provision and facilities, accommodation, bullying and harassment, disciplinary matters, unfair practice, discrimination, procedural irregularities and academic appeals. The OIA does not deal with academic or professional judgements. More information can be found at [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#).

Through induction and the student handbook, subscribers to the OIA need to ensure that students in England and Wales are made aware of the services offered by OIA.

# Office for Students (OfS)

Under the Higher Education & Research Act 2017, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) ceased to operate on 31 March 2018. On 1 April 2018, the majority of HEFCE's functions, combined with the work of the Office of Fair Access, combined to form the Office for Students (OfS).

The new public body, the Office for Students, is the government-approved regulator and competition authority for higher education in England. The Office for Students' mandate is to ensure that students:

- Can access, succeed in, and progress from higher education
- Receive a high-quality academic experience
- Have their interests protected during study
- Can progress to employment or further study
- Receive value for money.

The Office for Students will also be responsible for administering the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Register of Higher Education Providers and will allocate public funds from the Government to higher education providers in England each year. More information can be found at the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#).

# Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Government has introduced the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to recognise and reward excellent teaching in UK higher education institutions by rating them as gold, silver or bronze. The ratings are judged by an independent panel of students, academics and other experts.

Participation in TEF is voluntary, although English providers of higher education with more than 500 students are required to take part in TEF assessments.

Rating	Description
Gold	The centre consistently delivers outstanding teaching, learning and outcomes for its students that is of the highest quality found in the UK.
Silver	The centre delivers high quality teaching, learning and outcomes for its students. It consistently exceeds rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education.
Bronze	The centre delivers teaching, learning and outcomes for its students that meet rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education.

The TEF uses quantitative and qualitative data to assess the quality of teaching and learning including:

- Results from the National Student Survey (NSS)
- Progression data
- Evidence of teaching quality, for example rigour and stretch, assessment feedback
- Evidence of a high-quality learning environment, for example scholarship, research and professional practice and personalised learning.

Providers of higher education in England with a TEF award can increase their tuition fees in line with inflation. For providers of higher education in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, participation in TEF has no impact on tuition fees.

Detailed guidance about the Teaching Excellence Framework and the implications for funding can be found [here](#).

# Quality assurance

This section outlines the quality assurance process for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals.

## What is quality assurance?

Quality assurance underpins all vocational qualifications:

- Quality assurance is used to ensure that managers, Internal Verifiers and Assessors are standardised and supported
- Pearson uses quality assurance to check that all centres are working to national standards. It provides the opportunity to identify and provide support where it is needed in order to safeguard certification. It also enables the recognition of good practice
- It ensures that the standards and requirements for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) are met
- It facilitates a high-quality learning experience for students to enable high achievement.

Pearson's quality assurance system for all Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes is benchmarked to Level 4 and Level 5 on the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will ensure that centres have effective quality assurance processes to review programme delivery. It will also ensure that the outcomes of assessment are to national standards. As it includes additional elements that are not required for other Pearson qualifications, we term this 'enhanced' quality assurance.

The enhanced quality assurance process for centres offering Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals programmes comprises of five key components:

1. The approval process
2. Monitoring of internal centre systems
3. External examination
4. Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)
5. Annual Student Survey.

## External Examination

### What is external examination?

External examination is how we check that centres are operating appropriate quality assurance and maintaining national standards for our Higher Nationals programmes. Information and guidance,

that provides more information on the processes and support to help centres prepare, can be found in the [BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination](#).

All centres delivering BTEC Higher Nationals programmes will receive remote visits from Pearson-appointed External Examiners (EEs). The outcome of external examination will be:

- To confirm that internal assessment is to national standards and allow certification, or
- To make recommendations to improve the quality of internal assessment before certification can be released.

Centres must give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examination reports. The actions taken as a result of reports, or the reasons for not following recommendations, should be formally recorded and circulated to those concerned.

Centres must ensure that student representatives are given the opportunity to be fully involved in the external examination process, enabling them to understand all of the issues raised and the centre's response. At centre-level, the general issues and themes arising from the reports should be reviewed whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the students whose work has been sampled.

## Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)

The Annual Programme Monitoring Report is a **mandatory** written annual review form that provides an opportunity for centres to analyse and reflect on the previous teaching year. By working in collaboration with centres, the information can be used by Pearson to further enhance the quality assurance of Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes by sharing good practice, identifying problems and supporting centres. Further guidance regarding APMR can be found [here](#).

All Pearson UK and International centres delivering Higher Nationals must submit their completed APMR by the middle of February. Specific dates will be provided each year by Pearson HNQA

The APMR is an opportunity for centres to analyse and reflect on the previous teaching year. The APMR is not subject-specific but focuses on the centre's Higher Nationals provision as a whole. By working in collaboration with centres, the information can be used by Pearson to further enhance the quality assurance of the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals programmes by sharing good practice, identifying problems and supporting centres.

The APMR is an essential part of the enhanced quality assurance measures for approved Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals centres. Should a centre fail to submit their online APMR without good reason their External Examiner will be notified. Non-submission could lead to the suspension of certification or to the removal of programme approval.

Further information regarding the use of the electronic APMR can be found [here](#).

## Annual Student Survey

Feedback from students completing each stage of their programme is essential to enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning experience. Pearson will conduct an annual survey of the experience of Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals students each year.

The purpose of the survey is to enable Pearson to evaluate the student experience as part of the quality assurance process, by engaging with students studying on these programmes.

The annual Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals Student Survey has been designed to provide valuable and quantifiable feedback on the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals to inform the future design of the qualifications, to triangulate other aspects of the quality assurance mechanisms, and to support the development of resources for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals students globally. The survey will also provide a global perspective of student opinion from around the world and will be detailed in an [overview report](#) each year.

The survey will be sent annually to all centres delivering Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications, and it will form part of the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals quality assurance cycle. Centres are expected to promote student participation in the survey. Centres exceeding the minimum threshold for student responses will receive a bespoke report, detailing their results from the annual survey.

As part of Pearson's responsibilities as the awarding organisation for the qualification suite and in response to the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) regarding students' experiences, the results from the survey will provide data to better inform the continued development of the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications and their efficacy. Pearson has a responsibility to consider and act on the information received. Anonymised results will be shared with centres and Pearson will seek to address what may be common issues, and, where necessary, Pearson will provide appropriate support to both students and centres.

## The programme team

The programme team consists of all the staff responsible for the delivery, assessment and verification of a BTEC qualification. It is extremely important that sufficient systems and procedures are in place prior to delivering a BTEC programme. As BTECs are vocational qualifications, it is very

important that the programme team includes individuals with up to date and relevant vocational experience or knowledge, in order to get the best out of the qualifications. The roles undertaken by the programme team include the following:

<p>Centre Lead for Higher Nations</p>	<p>BTEC centres have a Quality Nominee who takes responsibility for the effective delivery of BTEC qualifications from Entry Level to Level 7. The enhanced quality assurance measures for Higher Nationals require additional oversight. In some centres, responsibility for Higher National provision is not undertaken by the centre Quality Nominee. An additional role is available on Edexcel Online for centres to designate the person responsible for Higher Nationals across the centre.</p> <p>The Centre Lead for Higher Nationals is responsible for establishing and maintaining centre policies and procedures related to Higher Nationals, qualification approval, and for ensuring the accuracy of public information.</p>
<p>Programme Leader</p>	<p>A Programme Leader is a person designated by a centre to take overall responsibility for the effective delivery and assessment of BTECs in their subject. The Programme Leader may also act as an Assessor and/or Internal Verifier.</p>
<p>Assessor</p>	<p>An Assessor is anyone responsible for the assessment of students and acts under the guidance of the Programme Leader, who will direct Assessors to appropriate training, support and standardisation. Typically, Assessors will devise assignment briefs, deliver the programme of study and assess the evidence produced by students against the assessment criteria in the programme specification.</p>
<p>Internal Verifier</p>	<p>Internal Verifiers conduct quality checks on assessment processes and practice to ensure that they meet national standards and that all students have been judged fairly and consistently. An Internal Verifier can be anyone involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme that is able to give an expert “second opinion”. Where there is a team of Assessors, it is good practice for all Assessors to be involved in internally verifying each other. Please note that Internal Verifiers cannot internally verify their own assignments or assessment decisions. There is no requirement for a Lead Internal Verifier (LIV) to be registered for BTEC higher level programmes.</p>

## Staff qualifications

Pearson does not currently explicitly stipulate any qualification or experience requirements for staff involved in the delivery, assessment and internal verification of BTEC higher education



qualifications. This is because it would not be practical to impose such stipulations to cover the very wide range of subject areas and field of experience that the BTEC higher education qualifications encompass.

However, it is expected that centres recruit all delivery, assessment and internal verification staff with integrity; and have robust staff recruitment processes in place. It is expected that staff hold a nationally recognised qualification at or above the level of the qualification being delivered and/or equivalent relevant experience. Pearson’s staffing requirements state that:

- The centre is committed to employ, train and support a sufficient number of appropriately qualified staff to ensure appropriate management, delivery, assessment and quality assurance
- Authenticated qualification certificates and CVs for staff involved in delivery are available upon request
- Systems are in place to ensure ongoing staff development and updating, including a research and scholarly activity policy for staff involved in the delivery of Pearson qualifications
- The trainers, tutors and Internal Verifiers hold relevant qualifications to deliver units/qualifications, as started by either the qualification specification or standards setting body
- The staff involved in the assessment process fully understand internal verification and how to apply the internal verification process.

## Staff handbook

A handbook for the teaching and delivery team will give key messages and clarify the major differences between BTECs and other qualifications that they manage. A staff handbook is recommended to help support full- and part-time members of a delivery team.

A handbook for staff to support their delivery of the BTEC Higher Nationals should provide essential information. Indicative content could be:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme title</li> <li>• Programme structure</li> <li>• Progression opportunities</li> <li>• Assessment plans, including dates, terms, semesters, assessment timings</li> <li>• Student complaints and appeals procedure (including the role of Pearson and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator)</li> <li>• Plagiarism policy and other types of malpractice</li> <li>• Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of External Examiners (EEs) and Pearson quality assurance visits</li> <li>• Staff roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Conflict of Interest policy</li> <li>• Continuing Professional Development (CPD)/Staff Development policy</li> <li>• Internal verification policy</li> <li>• How to conduct a mitigating circumstances claim</li> <li>• Learning and Teaching policy</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QAA Expectations</li> <li>• Assessment Boards and how to process results</li> <li>• Academic regulations</li> <li>• Internal verification plans and timings, responsibilities, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality Diversity and Equal Opportunities policy</li> <li>• Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy</li> <li>• Pearson Annual Student Survey</li> <li>• Pearson Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

All staff should be made aware of how to report suspected staff malpractice or maladministration to Pearson. Staff should complete the [Notification of suspected malpractice or maladministration involving staff](#) (JCQ M2(a) form) and send it to [pqsmalpractice@pearson.com](mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com). More information regarding malpractice and plagiarism can be found [here](#).



For more guidance on quality assurance procedures, please refer to the [BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination](#).

## Student handbook

A student handbook is essential in terms of guiding students through the course so that they are aware of course requirements, know what is expected of them and understand their rights as students.

### Content could include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General information about the centre</li> <li>• Course-specific information (for example, course title HNC/HND, pathway, units available, mode of study, course dates)</li> <li>• Progression opportunities</li> <li>• Student rights</li> <li>• Available resources, including HN Global</li> <li>• Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</li> <li>• Assessment and feedback</li> <li>• Mitigating circumstances</li> <li>• Late submissions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plagiarism and other types of malpractice (such as collusion and cheating)</li> <li>• Referencing</li> <li>• Student complaint and appeal procedure (including the role of Pearson and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator)</li> <li>• Student participation and feedback</li> <li>• Annual Student Survey</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

- Key contacts (such as tutors, administrators, technical support, pastoral support)
- Student support (information about where to go for different types of support, such as academic, health/wellbeing, and financial)

# Programme specifications

It is a Pearson requirement that all centres delivering BTEC Higher National programmes produce a programme specification(s).

What is a programme specification?

A programme specification is a concise description of both the intended outcomes of learning from a higher education programme and the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. The programme specification should not be confused with the standard Pearson BTEC qualification specifications that comprise the full guidance and units for each of these qualifications. The latter are the nationally devised and accredited structures, curriculum content and related guidance. They do not define the local dimension that the centre's programme specification is intended to capture.

Programme specifications should make explicit:

- The intended learning outcomes of the programme
- The teaching and learning methods that enable students to achieve these outcomes and the assessment methods used to demonstrate their achievement
- The relationship of the programme and its elements to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and, where appropriate, subject benchmark statements.

A good programme specification will improve student understanding of how and when learning occurs, and of what is being learned, and thereby inform reflection upon personal learning, performance and achievement, and subsequent planning for educational and career development.

How does a programme specification differ from a programme profile?

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has developed programme profiles. These provide prospective students with information that is mostly, although not always, of a summary nature. Programme specifications are different; they are typically used for a wider range of purposes, as well as providing information in greater detail.

Who should write a programme specification?

Writing a programme specification is an academic activity and the responsibility therefore lies with the programme team. They may wish to seek guidance and advice from quality assurance experts but they need to take ownership of the programme specification and must therefore make the most significant input.

Why is a programme specification produced?

Programme specifications provide clear and explicit information for students so that they can make informed choices about their education and the levels that they are aiming to achieve. They should provide comprehensive information regarding a programme that can be accessed by stakeholders including students, centre staff, Pearson, employers, and external agencies such as QAA. External Examiners (EEs) will request a copy of all relevant programme specifications during their visit. Programme specifications also allow centres to capture the local dimensions of their programmes, the distinct ethos of programme design and the unique characteristics of graduates, and how this is articulated through the choice of units and projects, and the approaches to teaching and assessment.

Who will use a programme specification?

Programme specifications are used by:

- Students and prospective students seeking information and understanding of a programme
- Institutions and teaching teams, to promote discussion and reflection on new and existing programmes and to ensure that there is a common understanding about the aims and intended learning outcomes for the programme
- Internal and external reviewers as an important source of information
- External Examiners (EEs), so that they can refer to and review the assessment guidance and methodology
- Employers seeking information about the skills and other transferable intellectual abilities developed by the programme
- Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) who accredit higher education programmes
- Staff during programme validations, annual monitoring and review, and teaching and learning discussions regarding the delivery of learning outcomes and support methods
- Centres, as a basis for gaining feedback from students or recent graduates on the extent to which they perceived that the opportunities for learning were successful in promoting the intended outcomes.

When is a programme specification required?

A separate programme specification is required for each and every Higher National programme on offer. There are no Pearson rules regarding which qualifications should be included in each programme specification, as long as **every** BTEC Higher National programme and pathway is included in a programme specification. For example, centres may wish to:

- Produce one programme specification for the entire department that includes the relevant information for each individual programme (for

example, a HN Engineering programme specification that includes sections on the HNC General Engineering, HND General Engineering, HNC Mechanical Engineering, and HND Mechanical Engineering)

- Produce separate programme specifications for each and every programme (for example, four separate programme specifications for the HNC General Engineering, HND General Engineering, HNC Mechanical Engineering, and HND Mechanical Engineering)
- Produce separate specifications for each pathway/specialism, even if they are within the same sector (for example, two separate programme specifications for HN Engineering: one for HNC/D General Engineering and one for HNC/D Mechanical Engineering).

In programmes with a number of pathways, any units and learning outcomes that are specific to each pathway should be identified, together with the relevant teaching, learning and assessment strategies. It is appropriate to produce a template containing all relevant generic information and to use this for the production of programme-specific programme specifications.

Is there a recommended format and style for programme specifications?

There is no recommended format and centres are free to decide upon the format that best suits their provision. The programme specification should contain all the information required by the student but should avoid educational jargon wherever possible. Any specialist terms that cannot be avoided should be defined and explained and the entire programme specification should be written in the most accessible style possible.

## What information should be included in a programme specification?

The following information should be included as a minimum:

- Name of awarding organisation (Pearson)
- Name of teaching institution
- Details of accreditation
- Precise title of the final award
- Programme title
- UCAS code (if applicable)
- Aims of the programme
- Relevant subject benchmark statements
- Programme outcomes; knowledge, understanding, skills, and other attributes
- Teaching, learning and assessment strategies to be used
- Programme structure and requirements; levels, modules, credits, and awards
- The role of the awarding body and information on external examination
- Date at which the programme specification was written
- Date at which the programme specification will be revised
- The names and contact details for all members of staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme
- The appeals process, including students' rights to appeal to Pearson and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

The following information would also prove useful:

- Admission criteria
- Assessment regulations
- Practical workshop rules, e.g. etiquette and health and safety details, etc.
- Centre policies and rules, e.g. Malpractice, Authenticity and Assessment, Appeals
- Information on attendance, late work policy, drugs, smoking, college information, helpline details
- Programme team and other key personnel details where appropriate
- Quality indicators
- Learning support provision
- Methods used to evaluate and improve quality and standards
- Name of programme leader
- Mode of study
- Duration of programme
- Level of programme within the Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ), if appropriate (does not apply to HNC)
- Date of last Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject review
- Details of accreditation by professional bodies
- Work-based learning elements
- Distinctive features of the programme.

Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Programme Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discusses the qualification specification to ensure a shared understanding and awareness of relationships between units</li> <li>• Creates assessment plan</li> <li>• Plans assessment activities and timescales.</li> <li>• Agrees entry requirements for the programme</li> <li>• Develops external links with employers and other sources of relevant vocational input</li> <li>• Identifies staff development needs and opportunities</li> <li>• Selects appropriate units relevant to students' needs and the local context</li> <li>• Considers resource needs for the programme including published, digital, staff, external inputs</li> <li>• Develops programme handbooks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivers programme according to agreed assessment plan</li> <li>• Ensures timescales are met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adheres to agreed process for internal verification</li> <li>• Ensures understanding of the documentation used, keeps it up to date, and makes use of electronic and paper versions as agreed</li> </ul>



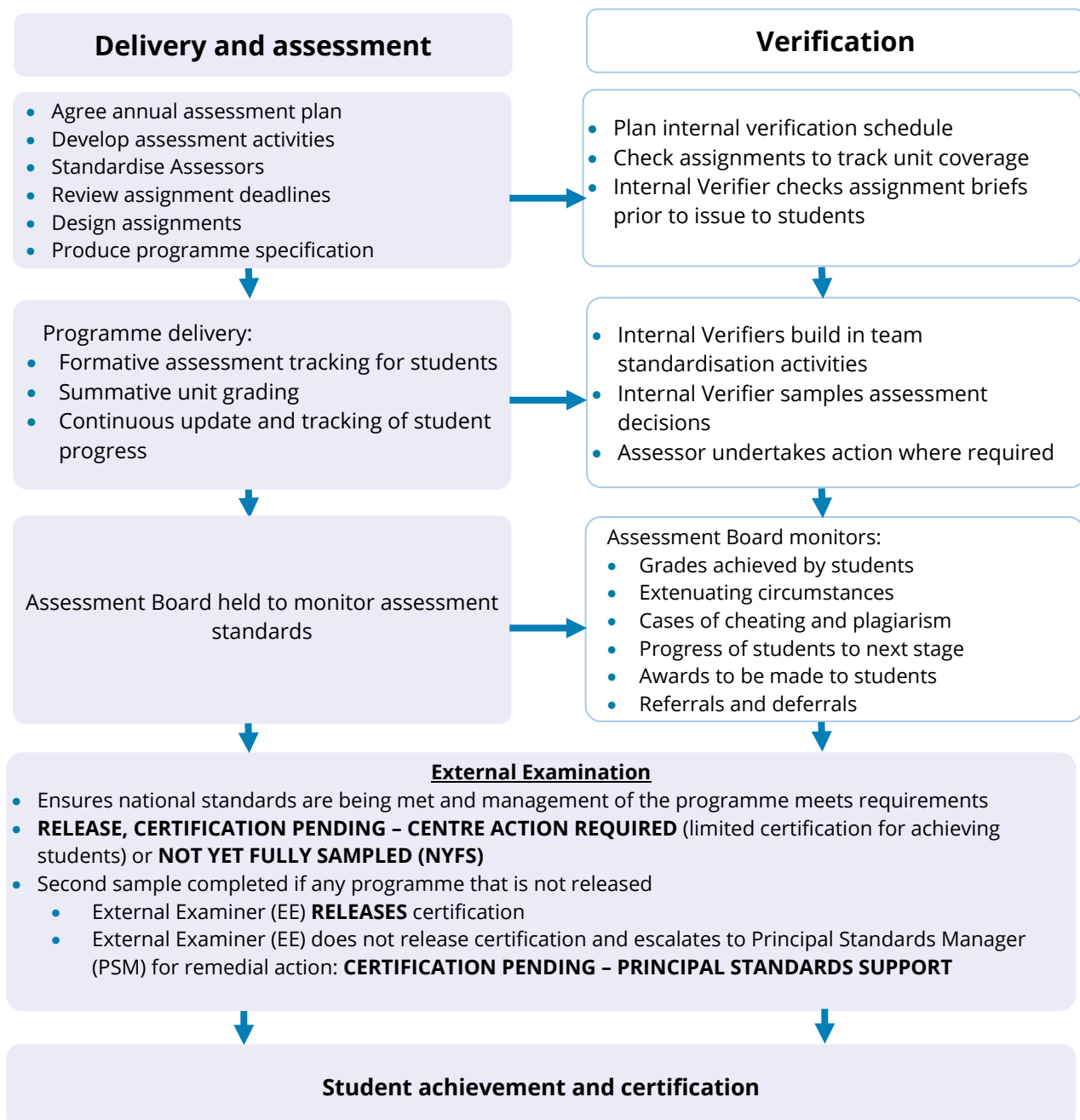
Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertakes standardisation with team</li> <li>• Applies assessment arrangements to deliver national standards</li> <li>• Designs, adapts and uses assessment instruments</li> <li>• Identifies formative and summative assessment opportunities for the student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivers content using effective approaches and takes account of support materials</li> <li>• Checks that all student work is authenticated and that any evidence accepted for assessment is the students' own work</li> <li>• Assesses student work according to the agreed assessment plan and against national standards</li> <li>• Provides constructive formative feedback to student</li> <li>• Provides guidance for the student to enhance assessment achieved on formative assessment</li> <li>• Provides interim/summative assessment decisions</li> <li>• Tracks student achievement and maintains accurate records</li> <li>• Plans next steps with the student</li> <li>• Oversees any permitted resubmissions/repeat units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completes any remedial action identified by the Internal Verifier</li> </ul>

Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Internal Verifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works with assessment team to ensure standardisation</li> <li>• Ensures that an assessment and internal verification plan is in place and operational for all qualifications</li> <li>• Confirms the quality of assessment instruments as fit for purpose</li> <li>• Advises on the interpretation of national standards</li> <li>• Coordinates assessment arrangements including additional sites, if appropriate</li> <li>• Approves and signs the programme assessment plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures an effective system of recording student achievement is in place</li> <li>• Advises on opportunities for evidence generation and collection</li> <li>• Keeps records of the verification process</li> <li>• Liaises with the External Examiner (EE) where appropriate</li> <li>• Monitors course files</li> <li>• Ensures appropriate corrective action is taken where necessary</li> <li>• Takes part in the formal stages of any appeal</li> <li>• Advises programme team on any training needs</li> <li>• Approves requested additional assessment opportunities for students</li> <li>• Provides feedback to the programme team, senior management and Pearson as required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides advice and support to Assessors on a regular basis</li> <li>• Undertakes internal verification, covering all Assessors and all units, in line with the internal verification plan</li> <li>• Checks the quality of assessment to ensure that it is consistent, valid, fair and reliable</li> <li>• Confirms whether assessment decisions meet national standards</li> <li>• Provides feedback to the Assessor, including action to be taken if assessment decisions are judged to be incorrect</li> <li>• Arranges standardisation meetings across teams and additional sites</li> <li>• Ensures own assessment decisions are sampled if assessing on a programme</li> </ul>
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completes induction to BTEC programme</li> <li>• Agrees to abide by the centre's policy on assessment including producing valid evidence for assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produces work for assessment to meet national standards as set out in assignments</li> <li>• Meets deadlines for assessment</li> <li>• Responds to formative feedback</li> <li>• Confirms authenticity of own work</li> <li>• Receives assessment decisions and feedback from the Assessor</li> <li>• Plans next steps with the Assessor</li> </ul>	

Stage	Planning	Implementation	Internal Verification
Pearson External Examiner (EE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocated by us, according to BTEC programme requirements</li> <li>Contacts centre to negotiate arrangements for external examination visit and sampling of students' work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepares visit schedule covering allocated programmes</li> <li>Checks management of the programmes is effective and meets our requirements and those of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</li> <li>Undertakes sampling in line with current requirements</li> <li>Checks consistency of the interpretation of national standards by each Assessor</li> <li>Identifies whether assessment decisions meet national standards</li> <li>Confirms that student evidence meets the grading criteria awarded</li> <li>Confirms student work has been accepted as authentic by the Assessor</li> <li>Checks that timely and effective internal verification has been carried out on assignments, assessment decisions and feedback to students</li> <li>Gives verbal feedback to the programme team or other centre-nominated person on decisions made</li> <li>Completes online report clearly identifying whether national standards are being met</li> <li>Where required, identifies any remedial action required for re-sampling and conducts re-sample</li> </ul>	

# Planning

Good planning is the first step to successful programmes. It is the best way of making sure everything is in place to ensure unit coverage is robust and achievable.



# Units, credits and Total Qualification Time (TQT)

All units are usually 15 credits in value, or a multiple of this. These units have been designed from a learning time perspective, and are expressed in terms of **Total Qualification Time (TQT)**. TQT is an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required for a student to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification. TQT includes undertaking each of the activities of Guided Learning, Directed Learning and Invigilated Assessment. Each 15-credit unit approximates to a TQT of 150 hours and 60 hours of Guided Learning.

Examples of activities which can contribute to Total Qualification Time include:

- Guided Learning
- Independent and unsupervised research/learning
- Unsupervised compilation of a portfolio of work experience
- Unsupervised e-learning
- Unsupervised e-assessment
- Unsupervised coursework
- Watching a pre-recorded podcast or webinar
- Unsupervised work-based learning.

## Programme structure

The programme structures for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals specify:

- The total credit value of the qualification
- The minimum credit to be achieved at the level of the qualification
- The core units
- The specialist units
- The optional units
- The maximum credit value in units that can be centre commissioned.

**When combining units for a Pearson BTEC Higher National qualification, it is the centre's responsibility to make sure that the correct combinations are followed.**

More detail of the specific structure of individual Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate and Diploma programmes can be found in the qualification specifications.

QAA requirements specify that providers of higher education should establish a formal process for agreeing the programme structure and delivery. The purpose of this is to ensure that there is a strong academic case for the delivery of programmes and that they are embedded within the academic/quality structures of the organisation.

## Guided Learning Hours (GLH)

Guided Learning Hours are defined as the time when a tutor is present to give specific guidance towards the learning aim being studied on a programme.

This definition includes lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, open learning provision and learning workshops. Guided Learning includes any supervised assessment activity; this includes invigilated examination and observed assessment and observed work-based practice.

Some examples of activities which can contribute to Guided Learning include:

- Classroom-based learning supervised by a tutor
- Work-based learning supervised by a tutor
- Live webinar or telephone tutorial with a tutor in real time
- E-learning supervised by a tutor in real time.

All forms of assessment which take place under the immediate guidance or supervision of a tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training, including where the assessment is competency-based and may be turned into a learning opportunity.

Students should be informed of the guided learning they should expect to receive in addition to the total number of additional study hours they will need to undertake independently to achieve the qualification.

## Modes of study

Students can study for the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals, either as a part time or full-time student or through a blended / distance learning approach. Whatever the mode of learning students should have access to a high-quality teaching and learning experience. This should include a qualified and experienced staff, an interactive and engaging curriculum, access to high quality learning material and a support system that caters for the pastoral as well as academic interests of students. Further guidance relating to teaching and learning can be found in the programme specification.

## Engaging with employers

Employer engagement with the curriculum adds value to the student experience, particularly in transferring theory into practice.

Centres should consider a range of employer engagement activities. These could include:

- Field trips to local businesses
- Inviting members of the local business community to present guest lectures
- Using employers to judge the quality of assessed presentations
- Employer advice on assessments
- Provision of 'live case book material'.

## Engaging with students

The student voice is very important in providing valuable information to enhance quality improvement. This input could include taking into account their views on how teaching and learning will take place, their role in helping to design a curriculum, or on the assessment strategy that will test their knowledge and understanding.

The students' voice can be captured both formally and informally. For example, through formal representation at course team meetings, election of a student representative for each cohort and student forums could also take place periodically throughout the year. Students should be encouraged to complete the **Pearson Annual Student Survey**. Informal opinions could be captured through feedback on assessments and tutorials.

## Resources

A criterion for centre approval is the need for material resources and suitable workspaces to deliver Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals. For some units, specific resources are required, and this is clearly indicated in the unit descriptors.

## HN Global

HN Global is an online resource that supports students and helps centres to plan and deliver Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals by providing appropriate teaching and learning resources. Pearson offers HN Global to all learners. This is a toolkit that supports the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of BTEC Higher Nationals. The [HN Global](#) website provides a wealth of support to ensure that students have the best possible supported experience during their course. With HN Global,

students can search, share, comment, rank and sort a vast range of learning resources via an online digital library and tutors can create and annotate reading lists for students.

In addition, there is a wide range of free-to-access websites that can be used to support students in developing their learning and academic study skills.

## Planning assessment

Plans should be developed jointly by the programme team and agreed by the Programme Leader. Key areas to consider are:

- Unit sequencing or integration
- Assignments and projects
- Resource planning, such as when to deploy specialist staff
- Timetabling, events, shows and trips
- Schemes of work
- External resources available
- Planning assignment deadlines across the programme to ensure that students are not overwhelmed at key points
- Feedback from students and from external sources, such as progression providers
- How authenticity of student work can be assured.

If a programme is delivered where units are integrated, the plan will allow centres to establish that all targeted criteria can be achieved. As a minimum requirement, the assessment plan must include:

- Names of all Assessors and Internal Verifiers

Dates for:

- Assignment hand-out and hand-in
- Formative feedback
- Summative feedback
- Internal verification and an opportunity for reassessment.

## Conflict of interest

Assessment staff may encounter a potential conflict of interest in their work. Examples of these may include:

- A close relation, spouse or partner within the centre who is either a student or another member of staff
- A close relation, spouse or partner acting as an External Examiner (EE) or other external quality assurance role.

A formal log of potential and actual conflicts of interest should be kept up to date within each centre, including actions taken to minimise risk. This record must be made available on request.



Individuals must always disclose an activity if there is any doubt about whether it represents a conflict of interest.

## Planning internal verification

Internal verification is the quality assurance system centres use to monitor assessment practice and decisions.

It ensures that:

- Assessment plans and schemes of work are in place to ensure full coverage of the qualification
- Assessment instruments are fit for purpose
- Assessment decisions accurately match student evidence to the unit grading criteria and assessment guidance
- Assessors are standardised and assessment and grading is consistent across the programme.

It is essential that internal verification is planned for at the start of a programme. An internal verification schedule must be agreed, to ensure that:

- All assignment briefs are internally verified before distribution to students
- A sample of assessment decisions is internally verified, covering every unit, every Assessor and a range of student achievement (e.g. Ungraded, Pass, Merit, Distinction).

# Student recruitment and induction

## Student recruitment

It is crucial that students are **recruited with integrity** onto the correct programme and level. There is a carefully designed progression route within the BTEC framework of qualifications. The appropriate levels are set against the equivalent expectations of achievement at Foundation Learning level, GCSE and GCE. Every BTEC specification has clear guidance on the level of the qualification.

## Entry Requirements and Admissions

Although Pearson does not specify formal entry requirements, it is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the students recruited have a reasonable expectation of success on the programme.

Centres are required to recruit students to Higher National programmes with integrity. They will need to make sure that applicants have relevant information and advice about the qualification, to make sure it meets their needs. Centres should review the applicant's prior qualifications and/or experience to consider whether this profile shows that they have the potential to achieve the qualification.

For students who have recently been in education, the entry profile is likely to be a level 3 qualification or for those who have returned to learning, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) could be considered.

Pearson's equality policy requires that all students should have an equal opportunity to access their qualifications and assessments, and that qualifications are awarded in a way that is fair to every student.

Pearson is committed to making ensuring that:

- Students with a protected characteristic (as defined by the Equality Act, 2010) are not, when they are undertaking one of our qualifications, disadvantaged in comparison to students who do not share that characteristic

- All students achieve the recognition they deserve for undertaking a qualification and that this achievement can be compared fairly to the achievement of their peers.

## English language requirements

For BTEC Higher National programmes that are taught and assessed in English, centres must ensure that all students can demonstrate capability in English at the required standard.

It is up to each centre to decide what proof will be necessary to evidence individual student proficiency.

Non-native English speakers and those students who have not had their final two years of schooling in English will need to demonstrate one of the following upon entry:

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B2
- IELTS 5.5 (including 5.5 for reading and writing)
- PTE Academic 51 or equivalent (e.g. centre-devised test).

## Enrolment records

It is a Pearson requirement that each centre holds an enrolment record for every student. Although there is no exhaustive list of what should be contained within a student's enrolment record, as a minimum it should include the following information about the student:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal details (i.e. contact information)</li> <li>• Next of kin contact details</li> <li>• Residency status</li> <li>• Photographic ID</li> <li>• Equal opportunities information (i.e. any disabilities or learning difficulties that may require additional learning support)</li> <li>• Funding and finance information</li> <li>• Criminal convictions declaration</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualification and education history</li> <li>• Work and relevant experience history</li> <li>• English language ability, including testing information if the student is a not a native English speaker</li> <li>• Programme registration details</li> <li>• Expected date of completion</li> <li>• Mode of study (i.e. part-time, full-time, distance learning).</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Centres must retain enrolment records for **three years following certification** and they must be made available to External Examiners upon request.

# Student induction

The induction the student receives is key to the success of the student on their chosen qualification.

Students must understand the programme specification, including:

- Programme structure (how and when units are assessed)
- Programme/unit content
- Assessment grading
- Level of programme and equivalency
- Purpose of the assignment briefs for learning and assessment
- Relationship between the activities given in an assignment and the grading criteria
- Nature of vocational and work-related learning
- Responsibilities they have in the learning process (e.g. the importance of meeting assessment deadlines and using opportunities for wider attainment)
- Importance of presenting authentic work and being clear on what constitutes as plagiarism
- Rules relating to submission and resubmission of evidence
- Appeals procedure
- Arrangements for any units that have external assessment or other exceptional assessment (e.g. through performances, trips, exhibitions).

# Student attendance

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals currently carry a maximum registration period of five years. When a student is topped up from the HNC to the HND, the five-year period resets as a new Pearson registration number is generated. However, it is important, and expected, that students complete their studies in a timely manner, in line with both the advertised programme duration and the expected completion date set at the time of registration. Centres offering Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals programmes are required to review student registration information annually to ensure that it is accurate and up to date. For students who are no longer active on a programme, their registration must be withdrawn from Edexcel Online (EOL) at the earliest opportunity.

Whilst Pearson does not set a minimum percentage attendance requirement, for BTEC Higher Nationals, centres must ensure that their attendance policy and processes are followed and that they enable and encourage their students to fully participate in the learning opportunities offered.

# Annual student fee

The annual student fee will not apply to students in the first year of their study, as this is already built into the qualification registration fee charged to centres.

Please note that this fee will be charged for each subsequent year students take to complete an HNC/D programme, after their first year of study. This means that if students complete the HND in two years, their centre will only have the £21 fee to pay once in their second year, whilst for any students who complete the HND in three years, their centre will have the £21 annual fee to pay twice (in their second and third years).

# Unit structure

BTEC units follow a standard structure. There may be slight variance between Higher Nationals and other Professional qualifications, but the basic principles remain the same.

Unit structure	Guidance
Unit number and title	The unit title is accredited and this form of words will appear on the student's Notification of Performance (NOP).
Level	Each unit is assigned a level, indicating the relative intellectual demand, complexity and depth of study, and student autonomy. All units and qualifications will have a level assigned to them, which represents the level of achievement. There are nine levels of achievement, from Entry Level to Level 8. The level of the unit has been informed by the relevant level descriptors and, where appropriate, the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and/or other sector/professional benchmarks.
Credit value	Each unit in Pearson BTEC qualifications has a credit value which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a student who has achieved all the learning outcomes of the unit. Students will be awarded credits for the successful completion of whole units.
Aim (QCF)	The aim provides a clear summary of the purpose of the unit and is a succinct statement that summarises the learning outcomes of the unit.
Unit abstract (QCF)/Unit introduction (RQF)	The unit abstract (QCF)/unit introduction (RQF) gives the reader an appreciation of the unit in the vocational setting of the qualification, as well as highlighting the focus of the unit. It gives the reader a snapshot of the unit and the key knowledge, skills and understanding gained while studying the unit. The unit abstract also highlights any links to the appropriate vocational sector by describing how the unit relates to that sector.
Learning outcomes	The learning outcomes identify what each student must do in order to pass the unit. Learning outcomes state exactly what a student should 'know, understand or be able to do' as a result of completing the unit. Students must achieve all the learning outcomes in order to pass the unit.
Unit content (QCF)/Essential content (RQF)	<p>The unit content (QCF)/essential content (RQF) identifies the breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to design and deliver a programme of learning to achieve each of the learning outcomes. This is informed by the underpinning knowledge and understanding requirements of relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS) where appropriate.</p> <p>Each learning outcome is stated in full and then the key phrases or concepts related to that learning outcome are listed in italics followed by the subsequent range of related topics. The information below shows how unit content is structured and gives the terminology used to explain the different components within the content:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning outcome: this is given in bold at the beginning of each section of content</li> <li>• Italicised sub-heading: it contains a key phrase or concept. This is content which must be covered in the delivery of the unit. Colons mark the end of an italicised sub-heading</li> <li>• Additional topics and guidance below amplify the sub-heading. They must also be covered in the delivery of the unit</li> <li>• Elements of content: the elements are in roman text and amplify the sub-heading. The elements must also be covered in the delivery of the unit. Semi-colons mark the end of an element (QCF only)</li> <li>• Brackets contain amplification of elements of content which must be covered in the delivery of the unit</li> <li>• 'e.g.' is a list of examples used for indicative amplification of an element (that is, the content specified in this amplification that could be covered or that could be replaced by other, similar material).</li> </ul> <p><b>It is not a requirement of the unit specification that all of the content is assessed.</b></p>
<p>Learning outcome and assessment criteria</p>	<p>Each unit contains statements of the evidence that each student should produce in order to receive a pass.</p>
<p>Guidance</p>	<p>This section provides additional guidance and amplification related to the unit to support Assessors. Its subsections are given below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links: sets out possible links between units within the specification. Provides opportunities for the integration of learning, delivery and assessment. Links to relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Professional Bodies Standards will be highlighted here.</li> <li>• Essential requirements: essential, unique physical and/or staffing resources or delivery/assessment requirements needed for the delivery of this unit are specified here.</li> <li>• Employer engagement and vocational contexts: this is an optional section. Where relevant, it offers suggestions for employer contact to enhance the delivery of the unit.</li> </ul> <p>These subsections should be read in conjunction with the learning outcomes, unit content, assessment criteria and the generic grade descriptors.</p> <p>The centre will be asked to ensure that essential resources are in place when it seeks approval from Pearson to offer the qualification.</p>

## Planning units

How centres plan assessment of units may differ from subject to subject, and relates to the timetable, Assessor expertise, resources available, etc. Centres should always take full account of

the published guidance for each unit to ensure a coherent programme of study. For example, core units often provide a platform of underpinning knowledge for other units and centres should think carefully about how these units fit together for delivery.

More information and guidance regarding single unit, single unit (staged) and integrated assessment can be found in our [assessment and feedback guidance for centres/tutors](#).

### Single unit assessment

A BTEC qualification comprises individual units that cover specific topics. For many sectors, a unit-by-unit approach to delivery is a valid and appropriate method. A unit may be broken down into two or more assignments if appropriate. However, Learning Outcomes should not be split across assignments, or require extra assignments or activities to meet the Merit or Distinction criteria within a unit. Activities should be written to allow opportunities for the full achievement of Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria.

### Integrated assessment

In certain sectors, the unit delivery can be integrated so that evidence can be mapped into two or more units. This approach may lead to a deeper understanding of the content and its application. It is important to map the assessment of evidence against unit criteria across units and keep accurate records of student achievement.

## Learning strategies

Learning in the BTEC Higher Nationals should be vocational, active, motivational and progressive. It will be closely linked to assessment, allowing development of skills, knowledge and attributes that will enable the student to complete assessments. From the start, it is important to consider the most effective way of delivering and assessing a unit or assignment. Learning strategies may include:

- Project work carried out as an individual or as part of a group
- Work-based learning
- Lectures and seminars
- Facilitated activities
- Visits to companies with a facilitator to structure the visit
- Visiting speakers from the vocational sector.

The emphasis should be placed on active learning, drawing on materials gained from the working environment or industry wherever possible. This will help students to develop the transferable skills necessary in a changing and dynamic working environment.

A large proportion of units are practical in nature, giving students the opportunities to tackle 'real life' examples to apply their skills and knowledge to case studies or projects. As well as Assessors in



the programme team having vocational experience, having someone currently working in the sector, providing an active role in an assignment, will increase the relevance of the assignment and further motivate the student.

When assessment has taken place, it is important that formative feedback informs students what they are able to do to improve the quality of the outcomes for a particular assignment. Feedback should be recorded to clarify this, and a further deadline agreed leading to the summative assessment decision.

## External links

Where possible, work-related programmes will benefit from external links with those working in the vocational sector. These links could be provided in any of the following ways:

- Checking the vocational relevance of the assignments
- Provision of 'live' case study material that is company or organisation based
- Student visits to companies and other vocational settings
- Professional input from companies and vocational practitioners, especially where vocational expertise is clearly identified in the delivery section of the units
- Work placement that is specifically related to the qualification
- Tutor placements to enhance vocational expertise.

## Assessment strategies

The assessment programme must be designed so that skills and knowledge can be developed in line with the assessment criteria. There is a range of assessment methods that can be utilised, such as:

- Presentations, written reports, accounts, surveys
- Log books, production diaries
- Role play
- Observations of practical activities or performance
- Articles for journals, press releases
- Production of visual or audio materials, artefacts, products and specimens
- Peer and self assessment
- Professional discussion.

Using a variety of assessment methods enhances learning and should improve the validity of assessment. They improve the knowledge of the assessment criteria and what is required to gain higher grade achievement.

# Peer and self assessment

While self assessment is not sufficient on its own, it can provide valuable additional evidence of learning and formative assessment. Ask students to self assess by providing them with self assessment criteria or helping them to develop their own. Self assessment has been shown to improve attainment if it is used consistently. It ensures students take responsibility for their own learning and focuses attention on criteria for success and increases effort and persistence.

Where appropriate, peer assessment impacts on self assessment by enabling individuals to become self critical and evaluative. It can provide a useful first and second stage prior to tutor assessment. It should generate action plans that are followed up prior to summative assessment.

## Group work

Working in groups is an accepted part of learning within higher education. There are widely recognised benefits of collaborative group work in terms of learning and skills development. When groups work well, students can produce quality learning outcomes and develop specific teamwork skills, as well as generic skills valued by employers.

Most students can benefit from learning in groups, provided the groups are well managed and there are clear and fair assessment requirements. In a group assignment, it is essential that each student provides their own individual contribution to meeting each of the unit assessment criteria.

It is important that Assessors clearly identify the purpose of using group work within an assessment:

- Generally, it is not the group work activities themselves that will form the basis of the assessment activity
- Group learning activities and skills, such as team building, leadership, etc. may be assessed towards gaining transferable skills and recorded as being achieved and feedback given, but they are not to form part of the assessment decisions for specific units.

Concerns about group assignments can be reduced by:

- Developing a suitable process for the selection of the team and having an interim appraisal and assessment process to check that each individual makes a sufficient contribution to the group work
- Helping students to understand the criteria to be assessed for the group product and process, where process is being assessed
- Informing them how individual contributions to the group will be measured and assessed against the unit specific learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria
- Developing assignments with activities that have multiple sub-activities that students can select and allocate to one another within the project

- Reviewing and agreeing all assessment decisions and overall grading in the Assessment Board.

## Guidelines on assessing group work

- Group projects should be included in the assessment schedule for a unit only where one or more learning outcomes of the unit indicate that they might be appropriate. In other words, does the learning outcome naturally fit the device of a group assessment?
- QAA expects a variety of assessment methods and consequently where appropriate, group working skills should be developed
- Students should be informed, in detail and in advance, of the basis for assessment of group projects, including the methods to be used to measure the extent of individual contributions
- If the group project or its assessment places on students an obligation to exercise skills or judgements beyond those required for the subject (e.g. peer assessment), then adequate training should be provided to assist students to exercise that judgement
- If there is to be peer assessment of the contribution of the students to a group project, then the process for collecting feedback should be confidential between the individual student and the Assessor. If peer assessment includes the measurement of the contribution, the method should be clear and simple to use and self-assessment should also be included
- A common group grade should not be assigned to all members of the group; individual contributions should be measured and graded against the learning outcomes, the assessment and grading criteria
- Evidence of observation of presentations and discussions (with peers, Assessors etc.) should be detailed and mapped to criteria in order to provide evidence of achievement of individual contributions
- It is good practice to encourage students to reflect on what they have learnt from the group work experience and produce a written evaluation
- In some cases, presentations may provide evidence only sufficient for Pass criteria, for example where a presentation contained no corroborated detail of individual activities undertaken by members of the group. In such cases, evidence for higher grades may be achieved through formalised questioning of individual students mapped to the assessment criteria, or having the students produce a supplementary report of their activities
- Feedback can be directed to the group with reference to individual contributions and achievement
- For graded programmes, the achievement of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors should be measured against individual contributions and the method of measurement should be clear within the assignment brief.

# Time constrained assessment activities



The word 'test' is used below to describe any type of time limited assessment activity.

The widespread use of time limited assessment activities (e.g. tests) is supported within BTEC Higher National qualifications, as this assessment method is common in top-up degrees offered by higher education institutions (HEIs). Where tests are used, the programme team should ensure that their use can be justified and that they are valid for the purpose stated.

When planning this type of assessment, the following points should be considered:

- Is the test an integral part of an overall unit assessment plan?
- Is the test structured validly so as to satisfy the targeted learning outcomes and assessment criteria? If used, are grade descriptors appropriately contextualised?
- Does the unit (and programme) have an appropriate spread of assessment activities?
- Is the test assessed according to the relevant assessment procedures?

## Integration within a unit assessment plan

All units should have a unit assessment plan, indicating where assessment and grading opportunities are available within the various assessment activities of the unit.

An individual assessment activity should show which of the learning outcomes are being targeted. QCF activities should also show which of the assessment criteria and/or grading descriptors are being targeted. RQF activities must further be contextualised within a relevant vocational scenario, as well as a narrative description of the activity that appropriately reflects how the activities will enable the student to access the full range of assessment criteria within the targeted learning outcomes. From the context and activity description, a judgement can then be made regarding the validity of the assessment in terms of the grading opportunities.

The same principles apply to a test. A test should clearly specify which assessment criteria and grading descriptors are being targeted. The action used in each of the questions can then be attributed to individual assessment criteria/ and thus confirm that the test is valid in terms of content and level.

The test should also be valid in terms of purpose. Tests provide a high level of certainty where authenticity is an issue. As such, a test could be a valid method of assessment, where the principal

requirements are confirmation that a student has an 'on-demand' factual knowledge of an aspect of a subject and if necessary, the ability to apply or explain it.

If appropriate, a test may be a reasonable means of reassessment after a late submission at summative assessment.

Tests could be constructed to address only selected assessment criteria or to include material relating to contextualised grading descriptors and so discriminate between Pass, Merit and Distinction levels of performance.

### QCF tests

However, since the grade descriptors relate mainly to methodology, it is likely that M1 (identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions), M3 (present and communicate appropriate findings), D1 (use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions) and D3 (demonstrate convergent/lateral/creative thinking) most readily lend themselves to a test format. However, in some disciplines, it may also be possible to assess M2 (select/design and apply appropriate methods/techniques) and D2 (take responsibility for managing and organising activities), using certain forms of time-limited activities.

### RQF tests

In designing test instruments for HN (RQF) assessments, the targeted Learning Outcomes on each test instrument must be clearly indicated to provide a focus for students and to assist with internal standardisation processes.

The test activities should enable students to produce evidence within the timeframe specified, that meets the Learning Outcomes of the unit across all grades of achievement. Criterion-based referencing should not be used within HN (RQF) tests, as assessment should take place holistically across all of the student evidence submitted.

There are some exceptions to this however, notably in units where the testing of students' learning requires students to demonstrate discrete application of information (typically numerical data) against Assessment Criteria that cannot be examined holistically in the context of the relevant Learning Outcomes.

It is not permissible to use multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank question types in RQF tests.

## Spread of assessment activities

A holistic view of the programme should be taken to ensure there is an appropriate spread of assessment activities within and across the units. The units making up the programme should collectively allow students opportunities to develop, and be assessed in, higher level skills, such as

analysis, literature searching, teamwork, management responsibilities, effective communication etc. Where tests are used, they should not be so numerous as to skew the balance of skills that can be best developed through written assignments, case studies, experimentation, investigative activities etc.

## Structure of a test

The duration of the test should be clearly stated. Where a test relates only to the Pass criteria of learning outcomes, each question relating to the targeted assessment criteria should:

- Be identified and clearly annotated on the test paper (programme teams may wish to use the notation 1.1, 2.2 etc., to indicate the first and second listed assessment criteria for outcomes 1 and 2 respectively)
- Be structured in a way that allows the student provide evidence that sufficiently addresses the unit content relevant to the assessment criteria
- Be set at the appropriate level
- Use valid action verbs that address the demands of the assessment criteria.

Where a test is used to distinguish Merit and Distinction performance, then the different grading components of the questions should be identified so that it is clear which grading descriptors (QCF)/assessment criteria (RQF) are being targeted. This can be achieved by appropriately contextualising the questions so as to satisfy the demands of the respective grading descriptors, i.e. using the language of the grading descriptors, within an appropriate vocational context.

In addition to the overall duration of the test, there should be clear guidance to students on recommended times to be spent on answering Pass, Merit and Distinction items in the paper.

Where Pass, Merit and Distinction items are discrete, the paper must also make it clear that the

student is **required to achieve Pass criteria questions at a minimum** to achieve the overall learning outcome.

## BTEC assessment procedures

It is not acceptable to use numbers to assess individual questions or to aggregate numbers to arrive at a final grade. Within the assessment of BTEC (QCF) qualifications, there is no system of compensation or transference of credit whereby a relatively poor performance in one aspect of unit achievement can be offset by a good performance in another aspect. These fundamental features of outcome-based assessment must be taken into account in test-based assessments.

# Authenticity and authentication

Only evidence for assessment that is authentic should be accepted, i.e. that is the student's own and that can be judged fully to see whether it meets the assessment criteria.

Centres should ensure that authenticity is considered when setting assignments. For example, ensuring that each student has a different focus for research will reduce opportunities for copying or collaboration. On some occasions, it will be useful to include supervised production of evidence. Where appropriate, practical activities or performance observed by the Assessor should be included.

Students must authenticate the evidence that they provide for assessment. They do this by signing a declaration stating that it is their own work when they submit it. For practical or performance activities observed by the Assessor, this is not necessary.

Assessors should only assess student evidence that is authentic. If they find through the assessment process that some or all of the evidence is not authentic, they need to take appropriate action, including invoking malpractice policies as required.

It is important that all evidence can be validated through verification. This means that it must be capable of being reassessed in full by another person. When practical and performance evidence are used, centres need to think about how supporting evidence can be captured through using, for example, videos, recordings, photographs, handouts, activity sheets etc.

The authentication of student evidence is the responsibility of each centre. If during external examination, an External Examiner (EE) raises concerns about the authenticity of evidence, or student declarations of authenticity are not available, a set timeframe will be given to produce these. If any concerns are not resolved, or declarations are not produced, within the timeframe given, the EE will not release certification for the relevant programme(s).

# Plagiarism

There are many definitions of what constitutes as plagiarism. All of them agree that plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct or, put more simply, a form of cheating. Plagiarism is much more than simple copying from another student, or from books or the Internet, and can be taken to include paraphrasing, sub-contracting the work to someone else, submitting the same piece of work for two different purposes, etc. Ultimately, plagiarism is attempting to pass off other people's work and ideas as your own.

Plagiarism is fundamentally wrong and provides students with an unfair advantage. Assessment procedures are compromised if the work submitted is not the student's own and **the External Examiner (EE) will set the programme's status to Certification Pending – Centre Action Required if they find evidence of student plagiarism that has not been detected by the centre.**

It is a strong Pearson recommendation that all student work is checked for plagiarism by staff and by anti-plagiarism software. Please note that some anti-plagiarism software is unable to read text that has been placed inside text boxes, **such as the one on this page**. Therefore, as of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, Assessors should not accept student work that makes use of text boxes; this should be returned to the student, so the text boxes can be removed and resubmitted in the correct format. **Pearson will consider assignments assessed in this format as an incorrect assessment decision and the External Examiner will not release certification for a programme if they find use of text boxes within students' work submitted after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019.** If centres are unsure, prior to assessment, as to whether student work has been submitted in the correct format, they should contact [hnqa@pearson.com](mailto:hnqa@pearson.com).

It is also extremely important that centres have policies and procedures in place to address contract cheating, the use of third-party services and essay mills. QAA has produced a guidance document providing further information which can be found [here](#).

**In the event of malpractice being suspected or proven, Pearson will be required to complete additional quality assurance checks before certification can take place.**



# Observation records and witness statements

We strongly recommend the use of witness statements, Assessor observation records or other paperwork. However, in order for these to be useful, they must record achievement at criterion level against the activity that is being observed. Checklists prepared against unit grading criteria are one way of doing this.

Tutor observations and witness statements are very useful supplementary evidence of achievement. However, an observation sheet or witness statement on its own may not be considered sufficient evidence for verification. It is important that it is supported by other evidence, such as audio/visual records of the activity, production reports, notes, self-evaluation by the student, etc. that can substantiate that the activity took place as described.

## Observation records

An observation record is used to provide a formal record of an Assessor's judgement of student performance (process evidence e.g. during presentations, practical activities) against the target grading criteria. The record will:

- Relate directly to the evidence requirements in the grading grid of the unit specification
- May confirm achievement or provide specific feedback of performance against national standards for the student
- Provide primary evidence of performance
- Be sufficiently detailed to enable others to make a judgement about quality and whether there is sufficient evidence of performance
- Confirm that national standards have been achieved.

### Observation records should:

- Be accompanied by supporting/additional evidence. This may take the form of visual aids, video/audio tapes, CDs, photographs, handouts, preparation notes, cue cards, diary record or log book and/or peer assessments records, etc.
- Note how effectively these were used to meet the grading criteria
- Record the Assessor's comments
- Be evidenced in student's portfolios when assessment is carried out through observation along with relevant supporting evidence
- Be completed by the Assessor who must have direct knowledge of the specification to enable an assessment decision to be made
- Be signed and dated by the Assessor and the student
- Also include students' comments.

## Witness statements

A witness statement is used to provide a written record of student performance (process evidence) against grading criteria. Someone other than the Assessor of the qualification/unit may complete it.

This may be an Assessor of a different qualification or unit, a work placement supervisor, a technician, a learning resources manager, or anyone else who has witnessed the performance of the student against a given grading criteria. It can be someone who does not have direct knowledge of the qualification, unit or evidence requirements as a whole but who is able to make a professional judgment about the performance of the student in the given situation.

The quality of witness statements is greatly improved, and enables the Assessor to judge the standard and validity of performance against the grading criteria, if:

- The witness is provided with clear guidance on the desirable characteristics required for successful performance
- The evidence requirements are present on the witness testimony, but this may need further amplification for a non-Assessor
- The student or witness also provides a statement of the context within which the evidence is set.

The witness statement does not confer an assessment decision. The Assessor must:

- Consider all the information in the witness statement
- Note the relevant professional skills of the witness to make a judgment of performance
- Review supporting evidence when making an assessment decision
- Review the statement with the student to enable a greater degree of confidence in the evidence
- Be convinced that the evidence presented by the witness statement is valid, sufficient and authentic.

When a number of witnesses are providing testimonies:

- It may be helpful to collect specimen signatures
- All witness testimonies should be signed and dated by the witness
- The job role/relationship of the witness with the student should also be recorded.

These details add to the validity and authenticity of the testimony and the statements made in it. Centres should note that witness testimonies can form a vital part of the evidence for a unit, but they should not form the main or majority assessment of a unit.

# Assignment design

Assessment instruments designed by centres should collectively ensure coverage of all learning outcomes and assessment criteria within each unit and should provide opportunities for students to generate evidence across all grades of achievement.

For **HN (QCF)** assignments, the targeted assessment criteria and contextualised grade descriptors must be clearly indicated on each assessment instrument to provide a focus for students and to assist with internal standardisation processes. Tasks and activities should enable students to produce evidence that relates directly to the assessment criteria and grade descriptors.

For **HN (RQF)** assignments, the targeted learning outcomes must be clearly indicated on each assessment instrument to provide a focus for students and to assist with internal standardisation processes. Activities and guidance should enable students to produce evidence that meets the learning outcomes of the unit across all grades of achievement.

Criterion-based referencing within HN (RQF) assignments, as assessment should take place holistically across all of the student evidence submitted.

When assessment instruments are being designed, centres need to ensure that they are valid, reliable and fit for purpose, building on the application of the assessment criteria.

Centres are encouraged to place emphasis on practical application of the assessment criteria, providing a realistic scenario for students to adopt, making maximum use of work-related practical experience and reflecting typical practice in the sector concerned. The creation of assessment instruments that are fit for purpose is vital to achievement.

Programme planning at the beginning of the year must include assignment mapping. This will ensure that the content of the units are fully met during delivery and that students are able to provide evidence for assessment that demonstrates full achievement of all the learning outcomes and grade descriptors.

Assignments activities will identify the learning outcomes being assessed to meet unit coverage, as described in the mandatory guidance within the unit. Activities should be challenging rather than easily achievable, differentiated by outcome so that they stretch the most able but are open to lower achieving students.

Assignment mapping will allow centres to monitor:

- that all assessment criteria from every unit being delivered will be assessed
- arrangements for staffing and resourcing of assessment activities where criteria from two or more units might be integrated in one assignment
- the planning of the internal verification of assessment during the programme.

#### A good assignment brief will:

- Make clear what evidence the student must submit and the format, word count, length of the individual elements
- Present a vocational scenario that provides a professional context in which the student will produce work
- Use language that is clear and precise both in defining the vocational scenario and in describing the evidence required
- Make clear the range of levels of achievement (Pass, Merit, Distinction) through the use of the same or similar command verbs found in the assessment criteria
- Clearly indicate the learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are covered by the assignment
- Allow a student to achieve a learning outcome (or multiple learning outcomes) at any of the levels defined by the assessment criteria.

#### An assignment brief must not:

- Change the wording of learning outcomes or assessment criteria
- Add any additional assessment criteria
- Use 'multiple-choice' or 'fill-in the missing word' activities (these are not appropriate for Level 4 or Level 5 qualifications)
- Use numerical marking or percentage weighting
- Penalise students for exceeding word counts or limits
- Associate the assignment with a single assessment criterion.

When writing assignments, the work a student is required to produce should be described using the same (or similar) verbs as those used in the assessment criteria. A different verb can be used, but this must be either of the same demand or include the action implied by the assessment criteria.

## Assignment briefs

The assignment brief is the document issued to students at the start of the assessment process. Clear assignment briefs will:

- Inform the student of the activities set
- Inform the student of the methods of assessment
- Set clear deadlines for submission of work.

Centres can send two assignment briefs per qualification framework to the External Examiner (EE) to review prior to their visit, for which they will provide formal feedback. Centres can also utilise our free [Assignment Checking Service \(ACS\)](#).

We provide assignment templates for centres to use under 'Teaching and Learning Materials' on the subject pages of our [website](#), however centres are free to design their own. However, any assignment brief must contain the following information:

Key information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment title</li> <li>• Assessor</li> <li>• Date issued</li> <li>• Deadline (for assessment and grading)</li> <li>• Title and level of qualification (as published in the specification)</li> <li>• Unit(s) covered (as published in the specification)</li> <li>• Duration (approximate time it is expected that the assignment will take to complete).</li> </ul>
Purpose / Scenario (QCF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview and aims</li> <li>• Vocational scenario (if appropriate, giving the opportunity to place the assignment within a vocational context).</li> </ul>
Assignment Brief and Guidance (RQF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This section of the RQF assignment brief should include a scenario, an activity(ies) and guidance that direct students as to the work that needs to be completed and submitted in order to meet the learning outcomes for the unit</li> <li>• The activity(ies) and guidance should contain sufficient information and direction to allow students to achieve all of the targeted learning outcomes for the assignment</li> <li>• <b>Individual assessment criterion should not be referenced anywhere within the assignment brief and guidance</b></li> <li>• Holistic assignment briefs can use the command verbs, as published in the qualification specification, or make use of different verbs as long as they are of the same demand and/or imply the action of the published command verb</li> <li>• Activities should be written in appropriate language for students at the level of the qualification</li> <li>• Include details about any specific preparation students will need to make.</li> </ul>

<p>Task (QCF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A task is a detailed description of specific activities the student will undertake in order to produce assessment evidence to address the criteria targeted</li> <li>• Tasks must be referenced to the learning outcome and criteria they address</li> <li>• Where possible, it is good practice for a task to encompass Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria within a learning outcome – however, for some units it may be appropriate for a learning outcome to be addressed by more than one task, depending on the assessment criteria it contains</li> <li>• Merit and Distinction criteria should not be written as separate tasks: they are achieved through a qualitative improvement in the evidence submitted for the tasks set across the unit</li> <li>• <b>Learning outcomes should not be split across different assignments</b></li> <li>• It is good practice that the stating of tasks is clear, specific, time-bound, stepped, relevant and realistic</li> <li>• Tasks should be written in appropriate language for students at the level of the qualification</li> <li>• Include details about any specific preparation students will need to make.</li> </ul>
<p>Assessment and grading criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The brief must state exactly which criteria are being addressed</li> <li>• <b>No aspect of the published criteria may be rewritten</b></li> <li>• Please see the section on grading for guidance on grade descriptors and contextualised grading criteria (QCF only).</li> </ul>
<p>Forms of evidence (QCF) / Submission format (RQF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear statement of what the student is expected to produce as evidence</li> <li>• Guidance on how the evidence will be assessed.</li> </ul>
<p>Other information may include</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources and reference materials</li> <li>• Wider assessment opportunities built into the assignment or mapped within the specification</li> <li>• Employer links</li> <li>• <b>Word count:</b> Where written evidence is required, a word count may be included to direct the student about the volume of evidence required. Students cannot be downgraded if they do not achieve or exceed the word count. Their performance in the assignment is based on achievement of the relevant learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grade descriptors.</li> </ul>

# Assignments involving group work

In assignment briefs, students should be provided with a full explanation of the requirements for the assignment in writing together with the usual assessment details (scenario, hand-out and hand-in dates, learning outcome/s and associated assessment criteria, etc.). It is suggested that this should include:

- The activities to be undertaken
- The basis for group membership
- Rules that cover the operation of the group
- Confidentiality agreements over what occurs within the group
- Activity allocation within the group
- The criteria for assessing the group report/presentation (product)
- The criteria for assessing the group process, if it is to be assessed
- The procedure for assessing individual contributions mapped to the learning outcome/s and associated assessment and grading criteria
- Who will carry out the assessment (e.g. Assessor, peers, employers, self, etc.)
- The fall-back position if a group loses a member or an individual's contribution does not meet the requirements of the activities.

## Internal verification of assignment briefs

All assignment briefs, even those provided by published sources, must be internally verified every year, **prior to issue** to the student.

Internal verification of the assignments should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge within the programme area. Internal verification should always be reported and recorded. If further actions are identified by the Internal Verifier, the Assessor is required to complete all actions and return it to the Internal Verifier for review and sign off. Once the assignment has been signed off as being fit for purpose by the Internal Verifier, it may be issued to the students.

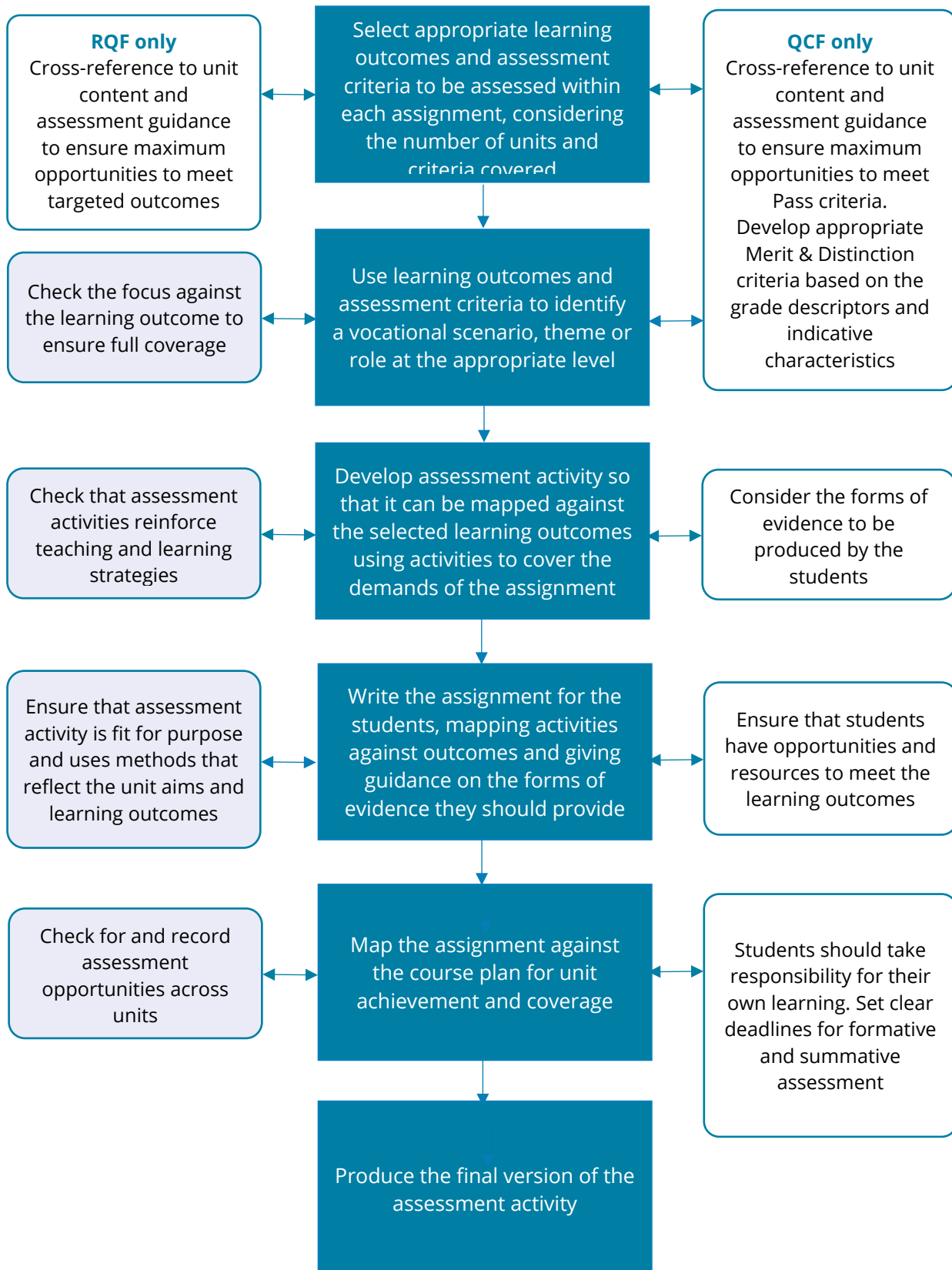
The purpose of internal verification is to confirm that the brief is fit for purpose, by ensuring:

- The activities and evidence will allow the student to address the targeted criteria
- The brief is written in clear and accessible language
- Students' roles and activities are vocationally relevant and appropriate to the level of the qualification
- Timescales and deadlines are appropriate
- Equal opportunities are incorporated.



For more guidance on quality assurance procedures, please refer to the [BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification](#)

# Assignment planning





# Assessment and grading

## Assessment tracking and recording

It is essential to track and record student achievement throughout a BTEC programme. All assessment must be recorded in such a way that:

- Assessment evidence is clearly measured against national standards
- Student progress can be accurately tracked
- The assessment process can be reliably verified
- There is clear evidence of the safety of certification.

Centres should plan a timetable of assessment activities with clearly identified evidence requirements and target completion dates. Include internal verification of:

- Assessment plans
- Assignment briefs prior to distribution to students
- Assessment decisions.

This enables a holistic approach to assessment of the programme and organises the sequence of delivery and assessment of units.

Prepare assessment tracking to record all assessment activities for the qualification on a unit-by-unit basis, at criterion level. Incorporate time for regular formative feedback. This helps to motivate students and provide learning targets and goals.

Track student progress, recording what each student has achieved and what still has to be done. This helps to ensure full coverage of the units and provide opportunities for grading. It also helps enable internal verification and provide samples for External Examiners (EEs) and other external audits as required.

## Formative assessment

Students working at higher levels should be capable of undertaking independent study and research, developing strategies to improve their own performance, supported by teaching staff.

**Formative assessment is an integral part of the BTEC assessment process**, involving both the Assessor and the student in a two-way conversation about their progress. It takes place **prior** to summative assessment and does not confirm achievement of grades, but focuses on helping the

student to reflect on their learning and improve their performance. The main function of formative assessment is to provide feedback to enable the student to make improvements to consolidate a Pass, or attain a higher grade. This feedback should be prompt so it has meaning and context for the student and time must be given following the feedback for actions to be complete. Students should be provided with formative feedback during the process of assessment and be empowered to act to improve their performance. Feedback on formative assessment must be constructive and provide clear guidance and actions for improvement.

Though we do not prescribe any hard and fast rules for higher level BTECs relating to the nature of formative assessment, the role of feedback in motivating students must not be underestimated. We recognise that informal verbal feedback is an ongoing process and is an important part of the Assessor/student relationship. However, it is good practice to plan for at least one formal opportunity to provide written formative assessment feedback on each assessment, at a point when students will have had the opportunity to provide evidence towards all the assessment criteria targeted. This should be built into the Assessment Plan and be formally recorded. This will help Assessors to manage their assessment workload by avoiding multiple assessments, and also reduces the risk of malpractice.

Usually, further formal opportunities for formative feedback should not be necessary. However, if it is clear at the formative assessment stage that students have misinterpreted or have been misdirected by the assignment brief, there may be the need for another formative assessment once issues have been addressed.

Professional judgment should be used to determine when this is appropriate and should ensure that an advantageous situation is not created for one student. All assessment procedures should be operated in line with the responsibility of being a member of a Pearson approved centre.

Following formative assessment and feedback, students are able to:

- Revisit work to add to the original evidence produced to consolidate a Pass grade or to enhance their work to achieve a higher grade
- Submit evidence for summative assessment and final unit grade.

All records should be available for auditing purposes, as we may choose to review records of formative assessment as part of our ongoing quality assurance.

## Summative assessment

Summative assessment is the final consideration by an Assessor of a student's assignment, agreeing which assessment criteria the student has met in the assignment and recording those decisions. However, students should be aware that summative assessment is subject to confirmation by the Assessment Board, and thus is provisional and can be overridden by the Assessment Board.

Assessors should annotate on the student work where the evidence supports their grading decisions against the unit grading criteria. It is not expected that students are offered opportunities to revisit assignments at this stage of the assessment process unless approved by the Programme Leader.

Students will need to be familiar with the assessment criteria so that they can understand the quality of what is required. They should be informed of the differences between grading criteria so that higher skills can be achieved.

## Marking spelling, punctuation and grammar

It is good practice for Assessors to "mark" spelling and grammar, i.e. correct mistakes on student work and expect the student to either correct them (at the formative feedback stage) or note them (at the summative feedback stage).

If student work has consistently poor spelling, grammar or language it should not be accepted for marking, but should be returned to the student to be corrected. The student must be given a deadline by which to correct the work.

Mistakes in spelling and grammar should not influence assessment decisions unless:

- The mistakes are so problematic that they undermine the evidence of student understanding, or
- Specific assessment criteria require good communication, spelling and grammar and/or correct use of technical language.

## Grading Higher National units

The grading of BTEC Higher National qualifications is at the unit and the qualification level

Each successfully completed unit will be graded as a **Pass**, **Merit** or **Distinction**.

- A **Pass** is awarded for the achievement of all outcomes against the specified assessment criteria
- **Merit** and **Distinction** grades are awarded for higher level achievement.

For Higher National (QCF) qualifications, centres are required to contextualise the generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors, which can be found below, for their assignments. For Higher National (RQF) qualifications, Pearson has produced specific Merit and Distinction criteria that are linked to every Pass criterion.

Assessment decisions for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each level of attainment in that unit and at the qualification level. The criteria for each unit have been defined according to a framework to ensure that standards are consistent in the qualification and across the suite as a whole. The way in which individual units are written provides a balance of assessment of understanding, practical skills and behavioural attributes appropriate to the purpose of the qualifications.

Assessors must show how they have reached their decisions using the criteria in the assessment records. When a student has completed all of the assessment for a unit then the assessment team will give a grade for the unit. This is given simply according to the highest level for which the student is judged to have met all the criteria.

## Grading Higher National units (QCF)

The generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors (listed below and published in [Annexe C](#) of each qualification specification) are for grading the total evidence produced for each unit and describe the student’s performance over and above that for a Pass grade. They can be achieved in a flexible way, for example in a sequential or holistic mode, to reflect the nature of the sector concerned.

In order to achieve a <b>Pass</b> in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met.</li> </ul>
In order to achieve a <b>Merit</b> in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met</li> <li>All Merit grade descriptors are achieved.</li> </ul>
In order to achieve a <b>Distinction</b> in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met</li> <li>All Merit and all Distinction grade descriptors are achieved.</li> </ul>

Each of the generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors can be amplified by use of **indicative characteristics**. These give a guide to the expected student performance, and support the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme.

The indicative characteristics shown in the table for each of the generic grade descriptors in Annexe C are **not** exhaustive. Consequently, appropriate characteristics should be selected from the list, or others that are appropriate for their sector programme and level should be constructed.

It is important to note that each assessment activity does not need to incorporate all the Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors.

## Generic grade descriptors and indicative characteristics

The differences between assessment criteria, grade descriptors and indicative characteristics are outlined in the following table:

Assessment Criteria	Statements that identify the important features to be present in the assessment evidence and are indicative of a <b>satisfactory</b> (i.e. Pass) level of achievement.
Grade Descriptors	Statements that identify the features within the assessment evidence which enable an Assessor to measure achievement <b>above</b> the satisfactory level (i.e. Merit and Distinction).
Indicative Characteristics	Guides to the expected student performance <b>within a particular assignment</b> , supporting the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme.

The Merit and Distinction grade descriptors and indicative characteristics identified below are published in **Annexe C** of the Higher National specifications.

Merit descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a <b>Merit</b> , the student must:	(Centres can identify and use other relevant characteristics. This is <b>not</b> a tick list).  The student's evidence shows, for example:
Identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective judgements have been made</li> <li>• Complex problems with more than one variable have been explored</li> <li>• An effective approach to study and research has been applied.</li> </ul>
Select/design and apply appropriate methods and techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant theories and techniques have been applied</li> <li>• A range of methods and techniques have been applied</li> <li>• A range of source information has been used</li> <li>• The selection of methods and techniques/sources has been justified</li> <li>• The design of methods/techniques has been justified</li> <li>• Complex information/data has been synthesised and processed</li> <li>• Appropriate learning methods/techniques have been applied.</li> </ul>
Present and communicate appropriate findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appropriate structure and approach has been used</li> <li>• Coherent, logical development of principles/concepts for the intended audience</li> <li>• A range of methods of presentation have been used and technical language has been accurately used</li> </ul>

- Communication has taken place in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- The communication is appropriate for familiar and unfamiliar audiences and appropriate media have been used.

Distinction descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a <b>Distinction</b> , the student must:	(Centres can identify and use other relevant characteristics. This is <b>not</b> a tick list).  The student's evidence shows, for example:
Use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions have been arrived at through synthesis of ideas and have been justified</li> <li>• The validity of results has been evaluated using defined criteria</li> <li>• Self-criticism of approach has taken place</li> <li>• Realistic improvements have been proposed against defined characteristics for success.</li> </ul>
Take responsibility for managing and organising activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy/independence has been demonstrated</li> <li>• Substantial activities, projects or investigations have been planned, managed and organised</li> <li>• Activities have been managed</li> <li>• The unforeseen has been accommodated</li> <li>• The importance of interdependence has been recognised and achieved.</li> </ul>
Demonstrate convergent/lateral/creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas have been generated and decisions taken</li> <li>• Self-evaluation has taken place</li> <li>• Convergent and lateral thinking has been applied</li> <li>• Problems have been solved</li> <li>• Innovation and creative thought throughout</li> <li>• Receptiveness to new ideas is evident</li> <li>• Effective thinking has taken place in unfamiliar contexts.</li> </ul>

## Contextualising the generic grade descriptors

The generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors need to be viewed as a qualitative extension of the assessment criteria for Pass within each individual unit. The relevant generic grade descriptors must be identified and specified within an assignment and the relevant indicative characteristics should be used to place the required evidence in context.

Each assessment activity does not need to incorporate all of the Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors. The assessor should include Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors and an

associated indicative characteristic that are relevant for the activity or task in hand. For example, when the student has to select and apply appropriate methods and techniques in order to carry out the assessment activity or task, then M2 would apply. Please note that if the assessor has included more than one indicative characteristic against an individual grade descriptor such as M2 in an assignment, only one indicative characteristic (for example, i) or ii)) needs to be achieved by the student for the grade descriptor, M2, to be achieved:

- i) A range of methods and techniques have been applied and
- ii) The selection of methods and techniques has been justified.

More than one opportunity can be given within a unit to achieve each of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors and may enhance the breadth and depth of study depending on the unit content or subject requirements. Care must be taken however, not to disadvantage the student through over-assessment, when it is not necessary.

## Grading Higher National units (RQF)

- To achieve a Pass, a student must have satisfied all the Pass criteria for the learning outcomes, showing coverage of the unit content and therefore attainment at Level 4 or 5 of the national framework.
- To achieve a Merit, a student must have satisfied all the Merit criteria (and the Pass criteria) through high performance in each learning outcome.
- To achieve a Distinction, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit as a whole.

The award of a Pass is a defined level of performance and cannot be given solely on the basis of a student completing assignments. Students who do not satisfy the Pass criteria should be reported as Unclassified.

## Submission of late work

Centre will need to develop and publish its own assessment regulations relating to BTEC higher level programmes, that is aligned with expectation B6 of the QAA Quality code. The regulations should include a code of practice on how late submission of student work is dealt with.

It is good practice for assessment regulations to be:

- Made available to students as well as the programme team: key regulations could be included in the programme specification
- Presented in an accessible and easy-to-understand format.

# Meeting assessment deadlines and mitigating circumstances

Centres must have a policy for dealing with mitigating circumstances if students are affected by adverse circumstances, such as illness, which result in non-submission or late submission of an assessment.

Students need to be aware of the importance of meeting assessment deadlines. Centres need to have a policy on assessment regulations which includes completing assignments by the deadlines given to them. Students may be given authorised extensions for legitimate reasons, such as illness, at the time of submission, in accordance with the centre's policies. This means that students are all assessed according to the same conditions and that some are not advantaged by having additional time or opportunity to learn from others.

It is good practice for assessment regulations to be:

- Made available to students as well as the programme team and for key regulations to be included in the programme specification; and
- Presented in an accessible and easy-to-understand format.

In accordance with a centre's own policy, they may apply a grading cap to work that has been submitted late. However, the submitted work should be assessed 'without penalty' in the first instance, the late submission should be recorded, and the student should be made aware that the lateness of submission may have an impact on their grade. In addition, the student should be informed that they may wish to submit 'mitigating circumstances'; if there are circumstances that have related to the late submission. A decision can then be made (following the centre's own policy) as to whether any exceptional/mitigating circumstances are accepted. Decisions will be ratified by the centre's Assessment Board or some form of Exceptional/Mitigating Circumstances Panel.

Further guidance concerning reasonable adjustments and special consideration in Pearson vocational internally assessed units is available on our [website](#).

## Extensions


Students should only be given authorised extensions for legitimate reasons and extenuating circumstances, such as illness at the time of submission. It is best practice to have a clear, published assessment procedure (e.g. in the code of practice and programme specification) for a student to formally apply for an extension if they have genuine reasons for not meeting a deadline. If an extension is granted, the new deadline must be recorded and adhered to.



Extension requests should be made prior to the assessment deadline and should be formally approved by the Programme Leader. The duration of extensions should be consistent across all students and should not be after summative feedback has been issued to the other students on the programme. All extensions granted by the Programme Leader must be recorded and made available at the Assessment Board and to the External Examiner (EE). Recording details of extensions enables the Assessment Board and the EE to confirm that the programme is operating consistently in accordance with the centre's and Pearson's policies and guidance.

Alternatively, it can be considered good practice to convene an 'Exceptional Circumstances Panel' that would be responsible for reviewing and accepting or rejecting extension requests from students. While there are no formal guidelines regarding the membership of such a panel, the Programme Leader must be present in order for the panel to be quorate. Minutes of Extenuating Circumstances Panels (if held) must be retained and made available to the Assessment Board and the EE.

## Resubmissions



Please note that there are differences in the resubmission rules between QCF and RQF Higher Nationals.

The key points regarding resubmissions and the differences between QCF and RQF HNs have been summarised in the following table, with further guidance on the rules and procedure for each framework detailed below.

QCF	RQF
Only one opportunity for resubmission will be permitted (new assignment).	One resubmission is allowed if a student does not achieve a pass on first submission (same assignment).
Resubmissions must not be capped at Pass, although if a student who submitted their work late is offered a resubmission, this <b>is</b> capped at pass.	The reassessment opportunity will be capped at Pass for that unit.
A student may request or be offered a resubmission if they have not met all of the criteria (Pass, Merit or Distinction) available in an assignment.	A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component for which a Pass or higher has already been awarded.

**Please note** that the rules and procedures regarding resubmissions in this guide must be adhered to at all times. Contravention of HN resubmission rules will result in the programme's status being set to Certification Pending – Centre Action Required due to incorrect assessment decisions being made. For example, if the External Examiner (EE) identifies that an RQF student has been offered a resubmission after achieving a Pass and has subsequently been awarded a Merit, thus contravening HN (RQF) resubmission rules, certification for the relevant programme would be set to Certification Pending – Centre Action Required until the centre 'rolls back' the grade to Pass.

When splitting units across more than one assignment brief, it can be considered good practice to wait until all assignments have been assessed before offering the student a resubmission(s). This is because although the student may not have achieved all of the targeted assessment criteria and learning outcomes within one assignment, they may have achieved the missing assessment criteria and learning outcomes in a later assignment, even if that assignment did not directly target the assessment criteria and learning outcomes in question. Waiting until all assignments have been submitted before offering a resubmission(s) allows centres to holistically assess the student's performance for the entire unit across all assignment briefs, rather than reviewing the student's performance for each individual assignment brief in isolation.

## Resubmissions (QCF)

Every assignment contributes to the final qualification grade; therefore, it may be appropriate for the Programme Leader or Assessment Board to authorise an opportunity for a student to resubmit evidence to meet the assessment criteria targeted by an assignment. The Programme Leader can only authorise resubmissions if this responsibility has been delegated to them by the Assessment Board beforehand.

A student may request or be offered a resubmission if they have not met all of the criteria (Pass, Merit or Distinction) available in an assignment. Resubmissions **must not** be capped at Pass level, although if a student who submitted their work late is offered a resubmission, this **is** capped at Pass level\*. Resubmissions can be authorised by the Programme Leader or the Assessment Board and should **only be authorised if all of the following submission conditions are met:**

- The student has met the initial deadlines set in the assignment, has met an agreed deadline extension, or has submitted work late that has been accepted\*
- The assessor judges that the student has fully attempted to achieve all targeted learning outcomes in their original submission
- The assessor judges that the student will be able to provide improved evidence without further guidance
- The assessor has authenticated the evidence submitted for assessment.

If a student **has not** met the conditions listed above, the Programme Leader or Assessment Board **must not** authorise a resubmission. In these instances, the student will be required to repeat the unit.

A list of all resubmissions authorised by the Programme Leader must be submitted to the Assessment Board and made available to the External Examiner (EE) for review and discussion to ensure that the Assessment Board and EE have oversight of all authorised resubmissions.

A new assignment brief must be issued to students for whom a resubmission has been authorised. Any evidence produced by the student in their original submission that did not meet the criteria remains valid and may be used for the resubmission assignment brief. Any assignment briefs used for resubmissions must be internally verified before being issued to students.

\* If student work that has been submitted late is accepted, a resubmission can **only** be authorised if the work has not met the Pass criteria and can only provide an opportunity for the student to achieve the Pass criteria. We strongly recommend that centres do not accept work that has been submitted late, and for which an extension was not requested and approved, under any circumstances.

## Resubmissions (RQF)

A student who, for the first assessment opportunity, has failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment.

- Only one opportunity for reassessment of the unit will be permitted
- Reassessment for course work, project or portfolio-based assessments shall normally involve the reworking of the original activity
- For examinations, reassessment shall involve completion of a new activity
- A student who undertakes a reassessment will have their grade capped at a Pass for that unit
- A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component of assessment for which a Pass grade or higher has already been awarded.

## Procedure for resubmissions (QCF and RQF)

If the Programme Leader or Assessment Board does authorise a resubmission, the following conditions apply:

- The resubmission must be recorded in the relevant assessment documentation
- The student must be given a clear and realistic deadline for resubmission that is consistent across all students granted a resubmission. We recommend that students be required to resubmit work within 15 working days of the student being notified that a resubmission has been authorised
- The resubmission must be undertaken by the student with no further guidance
- Only one opportunity for reassessment of each assessment criterion and Merit and Distinction descriptor (QCF only) will be permitted
- The original evidence submitted for the assessment can remain valid and be extended, or may need to be replaced partially or in full

- Arrangements should be made for resubmitting the assessment in such a way that does not adversely affect other assessments and does not give the student an unfair advantage over others.

The programme team may opt to conduct a resubmission of the assignment under supervised conditions, even if this was not necessary for the original assessment. For example, this may be necessary to ensure that plagiarism cannot take place.

The External Examiner (EE) is likely to want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of the sample they will review.

## Repeat Units



Please note that there are differences in the rules regarding repeat units between QCF and RQF Higher Nationals.

The key points regarding repeat units and the differences between QCF and RQF HNs has been summarised in the following table, with further guidance on the rules and procedures for each framework detailed below.

QCF	RQF
A unit can be repeated if the centre and the Assessment Board decides it is an appropriate course of action.	A unit can be repeated if the centre and the Assessment Board decide it is an appropriate course of action.
The unit must be studied again.	The unit must be studied again.
The unit must be capped at a Pass grade.	The unit must be capped at a Pass grade.
The centre should have a policy that states the number of times a unit can be repeated.	The unit can only be repeated once.

**Please note** that the rules and procedures regarding repeat units in this guide must be adhered to at all times. Contravention of HN repeat unit rules will result in the programme’s status being set to Certification Pending – Centre Action Required due to incorrect assessment decisions being made. For example, if the External Examiner (EE) identifies that a student has repeated a unit and been awarded a Merit, thus contravening the repeat unit rules, certification for the relevant

programme would be set to Certification Pending – Centre Action Required until the centre amends the grade to a Pass.

When a student repeats a unit, they should not be treated any differently to those students completing the unit for the first time, in terms of the deadlines given and the assessments provided.

## Repeat Units (QCF)

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) does **not** allow for compensation. This means that BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications on the QCF require students to achieve every Pass criterion in order to successfully achieve the qualification.

### Conditions for repeating a unit (QCF)

If a student has met all of the submission conditions, but still not achieved the targeted Pass criteria following resubmission, the Assessment Board may authorise a repeat unit opportunity to meet the required Pass criteria.

Alternatively, the Assessment Board, having reviewed and discussed a student's assessment profile, can offer one **final** resubmission of Pass criteria if it is agreed that it is necessary, appropriate and fair to do so.

- If the Assessment Board does not authorise a final resubmission opportunity, the student would be required to repeat the unit.
- If the Assessment Board does authorise a final resubmission opportunity, a new assignment must be issued to the student. If, after this final resubmission opportunity, the student has still not met the Pass criteria in the unit, they would be required to repeat the unit.

The Assessment Board must **only** authorise a repeat unit in circumstances where they believe it is necessary, appropriate and fair to do so. When repeating a unit:

- The student must study the unit again
- The overall grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit
- Centres should have a policy that states the maximum number of opportunities a student has to repeat a given unit or the maximum number of repeat units that would be allowed within a programme
- The standard rules regarding assessment, including those stipulated in this guide, apply to students who are repeating units, although the assessments that they submit will be treated as first submissions
- The External Examiner (EE) is likely to want to include assessments for students that have repeated a unit as part of the sample they will review.

Any evidence previously produced by the student for the unit being repeated that did meet the Pass criteria remains valid and may be used for assignments within the repeat unit. Students who are

repeating a unit only need to generate evidence for any Pass criteria that they did not achieve in their previous submissions.

## Repeat Units (RQF)

The following applies to a student who, for the first assessment opportunity and resubmission opportunity, still failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification:

- At the centre's discretion and Assessment Board, decisions can be permitted to repeat a unit
- The student must study the unit again with full attendance and (if required) payment of the unit fee
- The overall unit grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit
- Units can only be repeated once.

A student who, for the first assessment opportunity within a repeated unit, has failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment. This reassessment will be subject to the standard RQF resubmission rules and regulations as stated above.

If a student repeats an RQF unit and still does not achieve a Pass in neither their first submission nor resubmission, they will be required to either complete a different unit in full or take the unit as compensation. In either instance, the centre must make sure that the relevant rules of combination and requirements have been met.

The External Examiner is likely to want to include assessments that have been re-submitted as part of the sample they will review.

# Internal verification of assessment decisions

Internal Verifiers must sample assessed work for each assignment to check the accuracy of assessment decisions. Internal verification of assessment decisions should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge of the programme area.

More sampling should be undertaken with new or inexperienced assessors and/or with new BTEC qualifications.

During the course of the programme, internal verification sampling should cover the following:

- Every Assessor
- Every unit
- Work from every assignment
- Every assessment site (for multi-site centres)
- Pass, Merit and Distinction achievement (a student who has not yet achieved or a referred student is also a valid selection).

Feedback from the Internal Verifier to the Assessor should comment on the quality of their feedback to the student and the effective completion of documentation. The Internal Verifier should also give developmental feedback to the Assessor telling them what could be improved e.g. annotation of assessment evidence to show where grades are achieved. Internal verification of assessed work should be clearly recorded. If the Internal Verifier requires action, the Assessor should complete this and return it to the Internal Verifier for their review and sign off.

Internal verification of assessment decisions must not be end-loaded. It is important that it is undertaken as soon as possible after assessment as this will improve the quality of assessment practice and not disadvantage students. Internal Verification must be undertaken before work is returned to the students.

## Student appeals

A student appeal is a request to review decisions made by a centre on their progression, assessment and awards.

Centres should have in place a means for ensuring all students and staff are aware of:

- What constitutes an academic appeal and what is considered assessment malpractice
- The related processes for instigating an appeal or investigating malpractice
- The possible outcomes that may be reached

- The consequences of both internal and external outcomes
- The process that exists to enable students to make an appeal with Pearson relating to external or internally awarded assessment outcomes.

Procedures should be known and understood by students and staff. Malpractice issues can be minimised by ensuring students and staff are aware of the issues: plagiarism, collusion, fabrication of results, falsifying grades, fraudulent certification claims; referencing skills; promoting a zero tolerance approach. Centres do not need to inform Pearson of student malpractice for internally assessed units and the centre's malpractice policy should be followed in resolving the matter. If an External Examiner (EE) discovers plagiarism that has not been identified and/or dealt with by a centre, they will set the status of the relevant programme(s) to Certification Pending – Centre Action Required.

The appeals process must be understood by students and staff. It should be transparent and enable formal challenges to assessment grades. A thorough student induction programme could cover this. The student handbook is also a useful way to ensure the key information about assessment and appeals policies are communicated.

Students have a final right of appeal to Pearson, but only if the procedures in place at the centre have been fully utilised or if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome. Further details are given in the [Enquiries and appeals about Pearson vocational qualifications policy](#).

If students are not satisfied with the result of their appeal after following their centre's processes, they can also request that the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) review their complaint. The OIA will not deal with complaints about academic judgment but will look at academic appeals. Centres can check if they are a member of the OIA scheme in the [list of providers covered in the OIA scheme](#). Following the OIA process does not prevent students from pursuing a complaint or appeal with Pearson and they may choose whichever route(s) they feel is the most appropriate.

## Student complaints

A student complaint is the expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of their learning opportunities.

Centres must have procedures in place to enable students to constructively complain about their learning opportunities, to enable provision to be enhanced in a timely way. Making a complaint should not disadvantage the student. Centres must publish their complaints procedure to students.



The Pearson External Examiner (EE) will ask to meet with students annually when they visit the centre. They will ask the students directly about their experiences of teaching and learning on the programme and report appropriately in their report.

Students may also raise their complaint with the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) and this can be done simultaneously with any complaint submitted to Pearson.

## Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a course of learning. It is used sparingly and can be applicable to adult students returning to education.

Pearson encourages centres to recognise students' previous achievements and experiences whether at work, home or at leisure, as well as in the classroom. RPL provides a route for the recognition of the achievements resulting from continuous learning. RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met (through evidence that the relevant unit learning outcomes have been met by a students' prior learning), the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable.

Centres are expected to develop their own RPL policy in line with Pearson policy. Further guidance can be found in Pearson's [recognition of prior learning policy and process](#).


### Mapping achievement

Where centres need to map achievement in units attained from HN (NQF) qualifications to HN (QCF) units, check Annexe D of the relevant HN (QCF) qualification specification to see if the previous NQF unit maps to the QCF unit fully, partially, or not at all.

Some of the current HN (RQF) units have been mapped against the previous HN (QCF) units, and mapping information can be found on the relevant qualification pages of our website. As the current HN (RQF) qualifications are significantly different from the previous HN (QCF) qualifications, the RPL route will require students to complete considerable work to fulfil the missing learning outcomes required.

Any higher education award (carrying academic credit) which has been certificated by Pearson, cannot be used as prior learning to contribute to the achievement of another higher education award of an equivalent level to be certificated by Pearson. Therefore, any part of a Level 5 Higher

National Diploma that has been certificated cannot be used as evidence for RPL towards the achievement of an additional Level 5 Higher National Diploma. Where learning has not been certificated, this does not apply. Where higher education awards have been certificated by another awarding body, under license from Pearson, this may not apply as centres must make case by case determinations as to whether RPL is applicable.



Where Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) evidence is being assessed against graded units, Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria can be awarded.

## Retention of student evidence and assessment records

Student evidence and assessment records must be kept safely and securely to ensure that they are available for verification. Up to date, securely stored assessment records also help to minimise the risk of assessment malpractice, or potential issues if an Assessor leaves during a BTEC programme.

Centres will need to:

- Store all assessment records securely and safely relating to both internally and externally set assessments
- Maintain records of student achievements that are up to date, regularly reviewed and tracked accurately against national standards
- Retain both internal and external assessment records for centre and awarding body scrutiny for **a minimum of three years following certification**
- Have all current student evidence available for verification purposes.
- Retain all student work for **a minimum of 12 weeks** after certification has taken place. In certain cases, it may be more feasible to retain photographic evidence of three-dimensional pieces of work rather than retaining the work itself.

All assessment records (including internal verification records) must be secure against hazards like theft and fire, etc. The records must be of sufficient detail to show exactly how assessment decisions were made (i.e. to assessment criterion level). Data should only be accessible by relevant staff. Records must be securely kept for Pearson audit and in case of student appeals, certification issues, etc.

Up to date and accurate student progress information regarding registration, student feedback and progress, and achievement (at assessment criterion level) must be recorded. Staff must check the accuracy of the information recorded.

Student records and monitoring information should be kept in an appropriate and accessible format. This may be electronic. Records must be available to Pearson for audit on request. This is particularly important when there are changes to assessment staff. Experience tells us that this is a common cause of quality issues.

Student work must be made available to Pearson as required. On occasion, the regulator may also request portfolios of student work and assessment records. The format and storage of evidence must allow for this: security needs to be maintained. This is usually at programme team level. It is a risk to allow students to keep work long-term while on programme. Wherever possible, evidence produced by students still on programme should be kept at the centre. Electronic archiving is acceptable, providing it is sufficient and accessible on request.

# Assessment Boards

It is a **formal Pearson requirement** that centres hold Assessment Boards for **all** of their BTEC Higher National programmes. Centres are not required to hold Assessment Boards for their BTEC Professional programmes.

The main purpose of an Assessment Board is to make recommendations on:

- The grades achieved by students on the individual modules or units
- Extenuating circumstances
- Cases of cheating and plagiarism
- Progression of students onto the next stage of the programme
- The awards to be made to students
- Referrals and deferrals.

Assessment Boards may also monitor academic standards.

The main Boards are normally held at the end of the session, although if a centre operates on a semester system there may be (intermediate) Boards at the end of the first semester. There may also be separate Boards to deal with matters such as repeat units and mitigating circumstances. The Assessment Board can also delegate certain responsibilities to Programme Leaders, such as the power to authorise resubmissions.

Where a centre does not currently have such a process, the External Examiner (EE) will discuss this with the Quality Nominee and Programme Leader, stressing the requirement for Assessment Boards by both Pearson and QAA, and that Assessment Board reports and minutes provide valuable evidence for QAA's review processes.

## Preparation for an Assessment Board

All members of Assessment Boards must be aware of the associated policies and procedures prior to the meetings taking place. Written information should be provided about:

- Membership
- How the views of those unable to attend might be recorded
- The quorum for meetings and how to deal with the meeting being inquorate
- Provision for Chair's action, its limitations and the recording and reporting of such decisions
- The exercise of discretion in a consistent manner, for example in relation to extenuating/mitigating circumstances, and borderline cases.

It is essential that centres develop these policies prior to organising an Assessment Board and that they have been accepted by the formal structures of the centre's quality assurance systems.

Good preparation prior to the Assessment Board is essential if it is to be effective. Ways of ensuring this are to:

- Plan meeting dates for the academic year and circulate them to the members of the Assessment Board
- Ensure that these dates are after the External Examiners' (EEs') visit
- Collate all information regarding students' achievement and ask appropriate staff to indicate which students will need discussion at the Assessment Board, for example because of mitigating circumstances (this will save time during the meeting)
- Circulate an agenda in good time before the Assessment Board meeting and ask members to confirm their attendance. This is important as meetings must be quorate in accordance with the centre's policies
- Include a declaration of Conflicts of Interest as a standing agenda item so that members can abstain from specific discussions if they need to
- Identify who will minute the meeting and that he/she is aware of the responsibilities of this role.

## Membership

It is advisable that the Chair and the Secretary of an Assessment Board are, as far as possible, independent of the programme under consideration. Larger centres often use the head of a different department, or a Faculty Dean, or even a Head of Quality Assurance to ensure this. Likewise, the Secretary can be from another department or from the Quality Assurance department. It is more difficult for small centres to arrange for this requirement. The main point is that the Programme Leader **should not** chair Assessment Boards.

Centres cannot insist that Pearson's External Examiners (EEs) attend Assessment Boards, although it is essential that they have the right to attend. It may be possible for centres to arrange with their External Examiner (EE) an examination visit that includes time for them to attend the Assessment Board. Alternatively, they will need to see the minutes from the most recent Assessment Board(s) held.

All members of the programme team should attend the Assessment Board. Clearly, absences are sometimes unavoidable, but it would become a quality issue if certain members were regularly absent, or if attendance were to be persistently poor.

In larger centres the agenda is normally determined centrally, so that all Assessment Boards operate in the same way. In smaller centres this may be left to the department. The style of agenda will vary from centre to centre, but should cover the main purpose of Assessment Boards.


Centres with little experience in operating higher education programmes may request advice from the External Examiner (EE) in developing good practice for Assessment Boards.

It can save time if the programme team has discussed results prior to the Assessment Board meeting, although these discussions must remain strictly confidential.

## Assessment Board decisions

There must be clarity for students and staff about when and how results will be provided, and about whom students can contact should they require clarification of their results or advice on decisions affecting their future study. Consideration should be given to how students obtain results when they are released during vacations, or for students who are away from the location of delivery. When results are provided, they should include clear information about whether each result is provisional or final. If provisional, the information must make clear when the results will be finalised. Students also need to be aware of the timescale for lodging an academic appeal or complaint following final results.

Centres should implement an explicit policy detailing the length of time for which records of decisions and student results will be retained. This process helps to demonstrate that assessment processes have been properly applied through the records of Assessment Board discussions. This is particularly important in the event of an academic appeal or student complaint.



If a Pearson External Examiner (EE) attends an Assessment Board, it is in the capacity of an adviser; they have no power of veto at the Board. If an EE feels that a wrong decision is being made, they can only register disagreement with the decision in their report.

## Minutes

Assessment Boards are responsible for ensuring that assessment decisions are recorded accurately, supported by taking adequate minutes of any discussions which, in particular, demonstrate the factors taken into account when discretion is exercised, or extenuating/mitigating circumstances are considered. Such an approach provides assurance and transparency. The minutes of the Assessment Board **must** be made available to the External Examiner (EE).

# Confidentiality

Centres should be extremely careful about what happens to the documentation used in the meeting. Practice varies, with some centres insisting that only the Chair and Secretary keep the documentation, while others allow the programme leader and External Examiners (EEs) to keep them too. Centres must have clear regulations on how students are informed of their results. No discussion of individual results or counselling of students should take place until after the results have been formally ratified and results lists have been published. It is good practice for only certain people, authorised by the Assessment Board to do so, to discuss results with students.

## Calculation of the final qualification grade (QCF)

### Pass qualification grade

To achieve a Pass in the **BTEC HNC Diploma** qualification, a student must:

- Achieve at least 120 credits at or above Level 4 (a maximum of 55 credits may be at Level 5)
- Achieve a minimum of 65 credits at Level 4
- Complete a valid combination of mandatory and optional units
- Provide evidence for each learning outcome and associated assessment criteria for the chosen combination of units.

To achieve a Pass in the **BTEC HND Diploma** qualification, a student must:

- Achieve at least 240 credits
- Achieve a minimum of 125 credits at Level 5
- Complete a valid combination of mandatory and optional units
- Provide evidence for each learning outcome and associated assessment criteria for the chosen combination of units.

### Qualification grades above Pass grade

A Merit or Distinction grade for the HNC Diploma is based on the student's best performance in units at Level 4 to the value of 75 credits and for the HND Diploma it is based on the student's best performance in units at Level 5 to the value of 75 credits.

The units from which the best 75 credits are selected come from the whole qualification including the mandatory units.

Credit from mandatory units will automatically be included in the calculation once the maximum amount of credit for optional specialist units for the rule of combination is used up.

## Qualification grades

Students will be awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction qualification grade using the points gained through the 75 best credits based on unit achievement.

	Points per credit		Point boundaries
Pass	0	Pass	0 – 74
Merit	1	Merit	75 – 149
Distinction	2	Distinction	150 +

# Calculation of the final qualification grade (RQF)

## Conditions for the award of the HNC

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate qualification, a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4
- Achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at Level 4.

## Compensation provisions for the HNC

Students can still be awarded an HNC if they have not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed but have completed and passed the remaining units.

## Conditions for the award of the HND

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma qualification, a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 5
- Achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at Level 5
- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4
- Achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at Level 4.

## Compensation provisions for HND

Students can still be awarded an HND if they have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed at Level 4 and similarly if they have attempted but not achieved one of the



15 credit units at Level 5. However, they must complete and pass the remaining units for an HNC or HND as per the unit rules of combination of the required qualification.

## Calculation of the overall qualification grade

The calculation of the overall qualification grade is based on the student's performance in all units. Students are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction qualification grade using the points gained through all 120 credits, at Level 4 for the HNC or Level 5 for the HND, based on unit achievement. The overall qualification grade is calculated in the same way for the HNC and for the HND.

All units in valid combination must have been attempted for each qualification. The conditions of award and the compensation provisions will apply as outlined above. All 120 credits count in calculating the grade (at each level, as applicable).

The overall qualification grade for the HND will be calculated based on student performance in Level 5 units only.

Units that have been attempted but not achieved, and subsequently granted compensation, will appear as 'Unclassified'; i.e. a 'U' grade, on the student's *Notification of Performance*, that is issued with the student certificate.

	Points per credit		Point boundaries
Pass	4	Pass	420 – 599
Merit	6	Merit	600 – 839
Distinction	8	Distinction	840 +

# Example materials

Blank templates of the following documents are available on the [assessment and verification forms](#) section of our website. These documents may be used as a starting point to help plan, deliver, assess and verify BTEC programmes. They are not mandatory and may be amended to suit the requirements of each centre.

- Assessment planning
- Assignment brief – BTEC (RQF)
- Internal verification of assignment brief – BTEC (QCF)
- Internal verification of assignment brief – BTEC (RQF)
- Observation record
- Witness statement
- Assessment tracking
- Internal verification of assessment decisions – BTEC (QCF)
- Internal verification of assessment decisions – BTEC (RQF).

For HN (RQF) qualifications, Example Assessment Briefs (EABs) and Schemes of Work (SOW) have been produced for some units. Centres can use these documents as a template for their own delivery, contextualising them to meet their students' needs. These documents can be found on [HN Global](#).

Assessment and feedback guidance for centres and Assessors for HN (RQF) qualifications has also been produced and is available on [HN Global](#).

# Glossary of BTEC terminology

Academic Management Review (AMR)	This is the annual centre quality visit for UK Alternative Providers.
Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR)	The Annual Programme Monitoring Report is a written annual review form that provides an opportunity for centres to analyse and reflect on the most recent teaching year.
Assignments and Assessments	Assessment refers to the process of measuring the level of a student's achievement of required learning. As assignment is the articulation of the work that a student will be required to undertake, in order to provide evidence that can be evaluated in the assessment. Effectively, the assignment enables assessment to take place.
Centre Quality Manager (CQM)	Centre Quality Managers (CQMs) are an important part of our partnership and are full-time managers who work in Centre Management. They support Vocational Quality Standards to maintain effective quality assurance within Pearson vocational centres. CQMs provide support to maintain regulatory requirements and the integrity of centre assessment, delivery and quality assurance. They also monitor the Academic Management Review (AMR) process, including 'block recommended' centres. The CQMs can be contacted at <a href="mailto:qualitymanagement@pearson.com">qualitymanagement@pearson.com</a> .
Edexcel Online (EOL)	This is a multifunctional system for centres. Access is password protected and is managed by the centre's examinations officer(s). Screens show programmes and students within a centre, allow for new registrations or withdrawals, and provide access to External Examiner (EE) allocations and reports. EOL can be accessed at <a href="http://www.edexcelonline.com">www.edexcelonline.com</a> . Support for the use of Edexcel Online can be found on our website <a href="#">here</a> .
Exams Officers	Our Exams Officers team provides support to the Exams Officers at centres with a range of queries and issues, such as those relating to administration. The team also sends weekly communications to Exams Officers and conducts face-to-face and online training sessions to help Exams Officers navigate through Pearson's systems. They can be reached at <a href="mailto:examsofficers@pearson.com">examsofficers@pearson.com</a> .
External Examiner (EE)	The External Examiner (EE) is a subject assessment specialist appointed by the awarding body to conduct external examination. This verifies that centre management of programmes and assessment decisions meet national standards. External examination is conducted by an annual visit.

Guided Learning Hours (GLH)	Guided Learning Hours are defined as the time when a tutor is present to give specific guidance towards the learning aim being studied on a programme. This definition includes lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, open learning provision and learning workshops. Guided Learning includes any supervised assessment activity, this includes invigilated examination and observed assessment and observed work-based practice
Higher Nationals Assessment	The Higher Nationals Assessment team is responsible for the quality assurance of all BTEC Higher Nationals qualifications. The Assessment team manages External Examiners (EEs) and are centres' main point of contact for quality assurance and assessment concerns and queries. They can be contacted at <a href="mailto:hnqa@pearson.com">hnqa@pearson.com</a> .
Internal Verification (IV)	This is a centre-/team-based process. Internal Verifiers check the quality of assignments before delivery to students and verify the accuracy of assessment decisions to meet national standards. Centres should have an internal verification plan to manage the process.
Office for Students (OfS)	A regulatory and competition authority for England that is responsible for distributing funding to institutions delivering higher education programmes, promoting fair access to higher education, administering the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Register of Higher Education Providers.
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	The regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. Qualifications Wales has responsibility for education in Wales, and the Department for Education (Northern Ireland) has responsibility for education in Northern Ireland.
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	This is the independent body responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education, this includes UK qualifications delivered outside the UK. As such Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals must meet the quality standards prescribed by the QAA.
QAA Quality Code	The QAA has developed a Quality Code in liaison with the higher education sector and it is maintained and published on the sector's behalf, by the QAA. It sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet.
QCF	Qualification Credit Framework
Quality Nominee (QN)	This is the person nominated by the centre who acts as main contact for BTEC.
PQS Malpractice	This team manages incidences of student and staff malpractice within Pearson qualifications. For internally assessed units, centres do not need to inform us of student malpractice. If a staff member is suspected of malpractice, centres must complete a <a href="#">form</a> and send this to <a href="mailto:pqsmalpractice@pearson.com">pqsmalpractice@pearson.com</a> , so that our Investigations team can review the situation and advise.
Principal Standards Manager (PSM)	There is a team of Principal Standard Managers across all sectors whose remit is to ensure that standards are met and maintained for vocational qualifications. The PSM team support, monitor and evaluate quality

	<p>assurance processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose, making decisions on revisions and changes required and provide sector specific support to centres to ensure that centres provide and maintain effective quality assurance of national standards for vocational qualifications. They work alongside Vocational Assessment teams, Centre Quality Managers, Vocational Quality Advisors and External Examiners to ensure that national and quality standards are met and maintained.</p>
RQF	Regulated Qualification Framework
Vocational Quality Advisor (VQA)	<p>The Vocational Quality Advisors (VQAs) are a team of specialists in vocational quality assurance. They provide support to Quality Nominees, Lead Internal Verifiers and Assessors regarding a range of topics related to quality assurance, such as internal assessment and verification, and standards verification and external examination. In addition, they provide support, communication and development for Quality Nominees both online and face-to-face. They can be contacted at <a href="mailto:qualitynominees@pearson.com">qualitynominees@pearson.com</a>.</p>



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